QB OR NOT TO BE?

BLEDSOE • BLAKE • McNAIR • SHULER - GROWING PAINS FOR NFL'S YOUNG GUNS

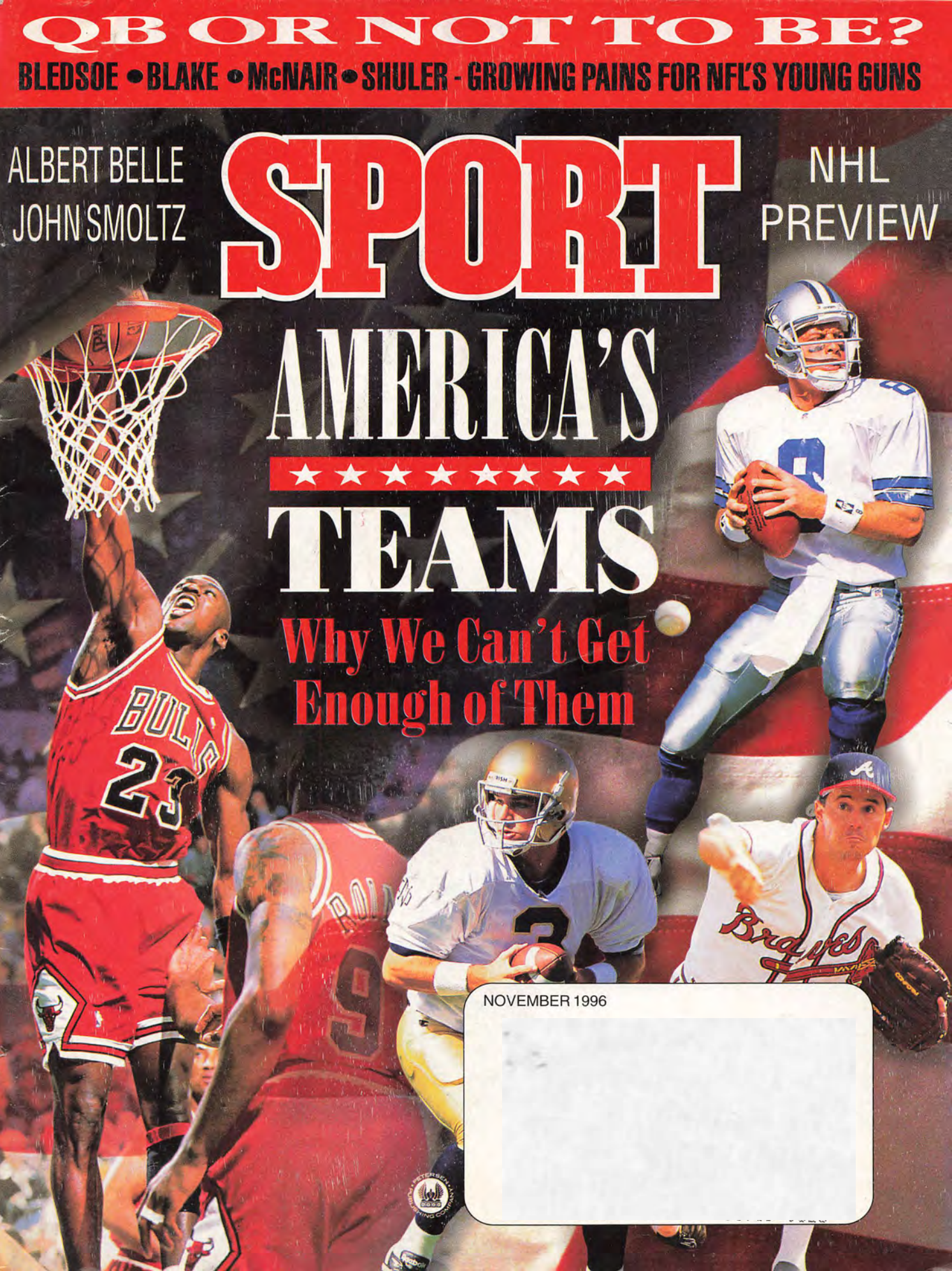
ALBERT BELLE
JOHN SMOLTZ

SPORT

NHL PREVIEW

AMERICA'S TEAMS

Why We Can't Get Enough of Them



NOVEMBER 1996

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MY TRIP TO SEATTLE

BY CRASH BANDICOOT™

1. HERE'S ME DRIVING.

4. HERE'S ME SHOWING OFF MY GAME'S REAL-TIME 3-D WORLD WITH ITS LUSH, ORGANIC ENVIRONMENTS, TONS OF OBSTACLES, SECRET PATHWAYS AND BONUS LEVELS. OUTSIDE OF NINTENDO® HEADQUARTERS.

5. HERE'S ME BEING ESCORTED OFF THE PREMISES. BY SECURITY.

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KIDS TO ADULTS K-A CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

2. HERE'S ME AT THE SPACE NEEDLE.

3. HERE'S ME WITH SOME OF THE GALS AT SEATTLE SLIM'S.

MY GAME →

CRASH BANDICOOT

Crash Bandicoot™
Sony's long-awaited entry into the platform game arena. You've never experienced anything quite as sensational as this fully animated cartoon world coming to life. It's flooded with obstacles, enormous levels, unbelievable graphics, detailed real-time lighting, amazing music and sound effects. Packed full of solid gameplay, hidden bonus levels, secret pathways and fiendish traps.

PlayStation

MY LOGOS ↓

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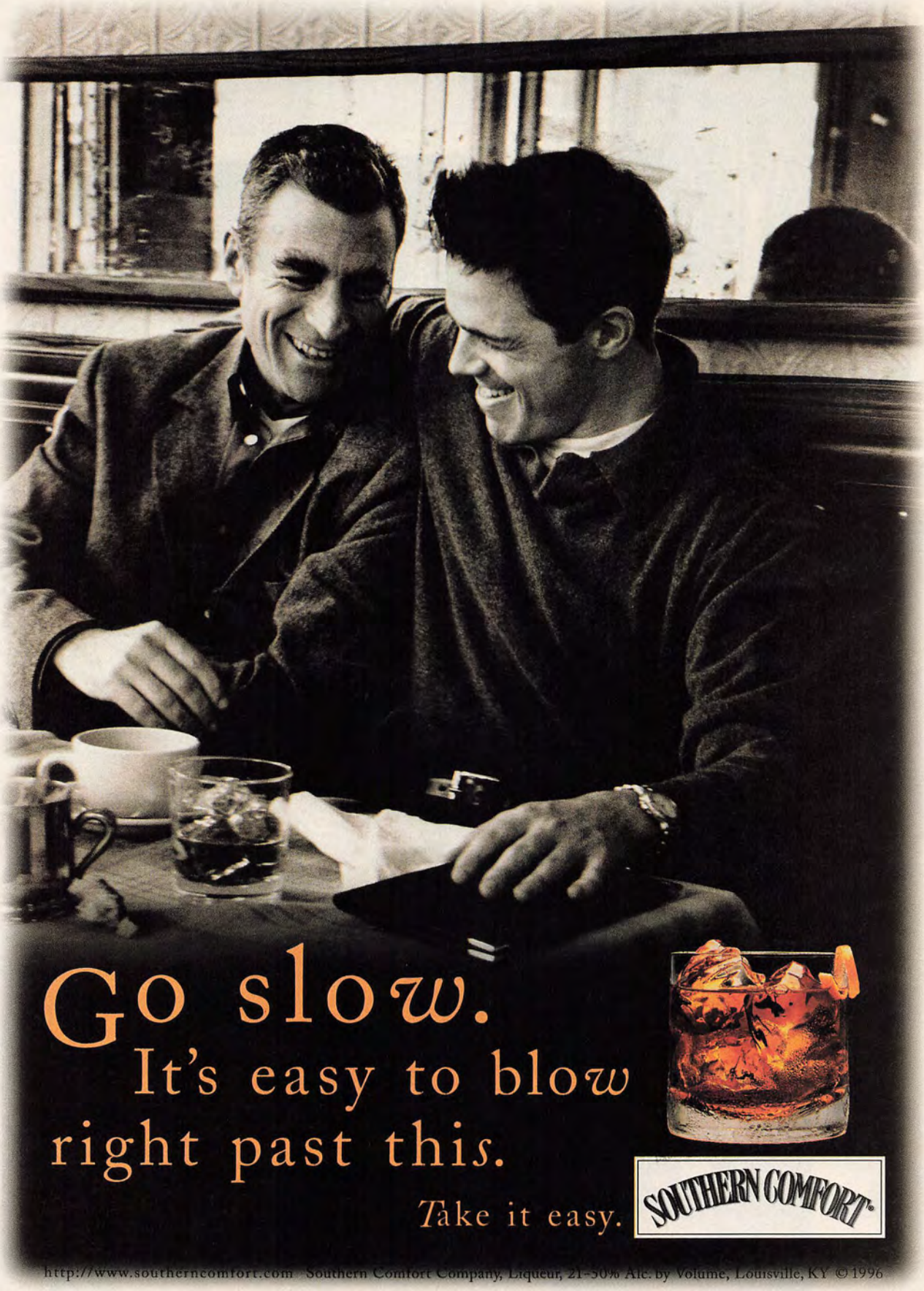
universal interactive studios

NAUGHTY DOG

PlayStation


Go slow.
It's easy to blow
right past this.
Take it easy.
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http://www.southerncomfort.com Southern Comfort Company, Liqueur, 21-50% Alc. by Volume, Louisville, KY © 1996

COVER STORY

32 AMERICA'S TEAMS

We can't get enough of the Cowboys, Bulls, Braves and Fighting Irish

TOM DIPACE

COVER: MICHAEL JORDAN & BULLS BY NATHANIEL S. BUTLER/NBA PHOTOS; TROY AIKMAN BY TOM DIPACE; GREG MADDUX BY SCOTT JORDAN LEVY; RON POWLUS BY TOM DIPACE.

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J. GIAMUNDO/BRUCE BENNETT STUDIOS

SPORT
NOVEMBER 1996

RICH KANE/SPORTSCHROME

November fast approaches. While for many that signals the beginning of the NBA season and a time for NFL playoff contenders to emerge, it also marks the coming of election day, a good time to reflect upon government, your lifestyle and your rights as an American.

In many ways, the federal government has become too large to be efficient. The original intentions of the founding fathers have been lost in a mechanism that spends too much time thinking of ways to perpetuate its own existence. With each new day the federal system devises new ways to be held less accountable for its actions.

What this means to us is that even more of our personal freedoms hang in the balance. Where we live, how we live and the kinds of things that are available for purchase are being controlled and mandated.

Today, governmental regulations are making the decisions that not only determine what you can purchase, but the legality of the advertising for those products, even after other governmental bodies have deemed those products legal.

Due to the critical issues in question this election year, it is more important than ever that you get out and voice your opinion through your vote. Free expression is fundamental to our way of life. We are proud of our efforts at Petersen Publishing and wish to continue in the creation of magazines that are entertaining, informative and fair. We look to you to make a voting decision that truly represents your personal convictions. Get out and vote Tuesday, November 5th!

SPORT

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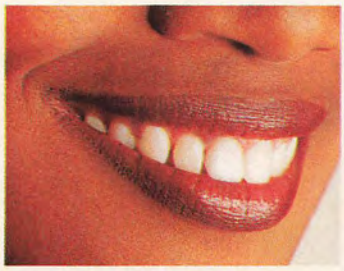

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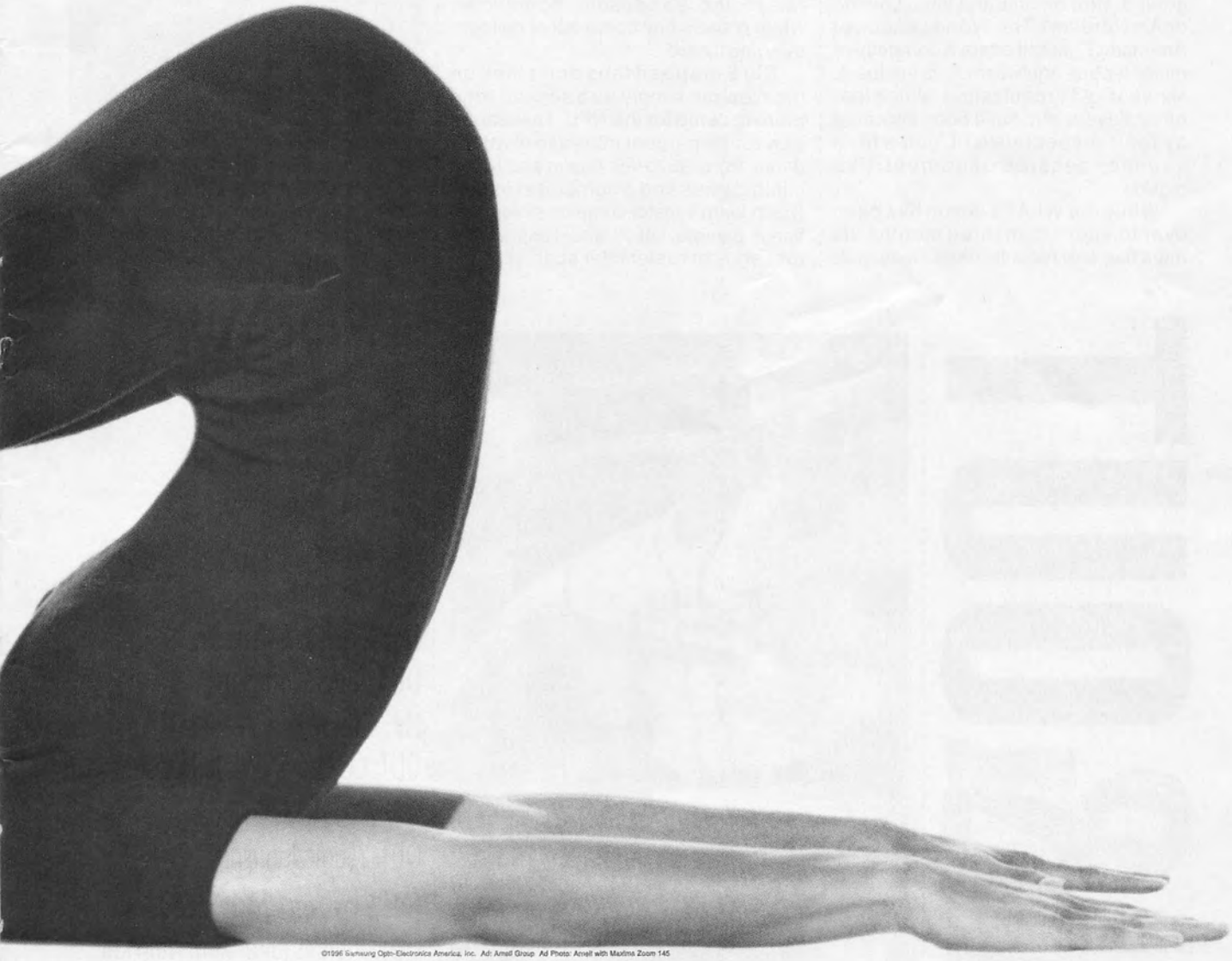

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Maxima Zoom 125
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38-105mm

NO WLAF-ING MATTER

While prospective major-league baseball players hone their craft in places like Batavia and Billings and NBA hopefuls can bounce around CBA ports like Omaha and Yakima, NFL prospects, too, can gain experience in accessible, albeit faraway, training ground. How about Barcelona, London or Amsterdam? The World League of American Football offers a competitive minor-league equivalent in its six-team, six-year-old organization, which features players who have been allocated by their respective NFL clubs for a summer session of competitive pigskin.

While the WLAF season has been over for more than three months, its mark has only recently been made; preseason NFL camps included more than 100 former players. Among them were 63 players allocated by NFL teams, including former college stars like quarterback Gino Torretta (49ers, formerly of the University of Miami), wide receiver Sean LaChapelle (Chiefs, formerly of UCLA), and running backs Trevor Cobb (Chiefs, Rice) and Siran Stacy (Chiefs, Alabama). Past alumni include Steelers quarterback Jim Miller, Cowboys quarterback Jason Garrett and Chargers punter Darren Bennett (pictured), who last year became the first former World Leaguer to receive NFL All-Pro recognition.

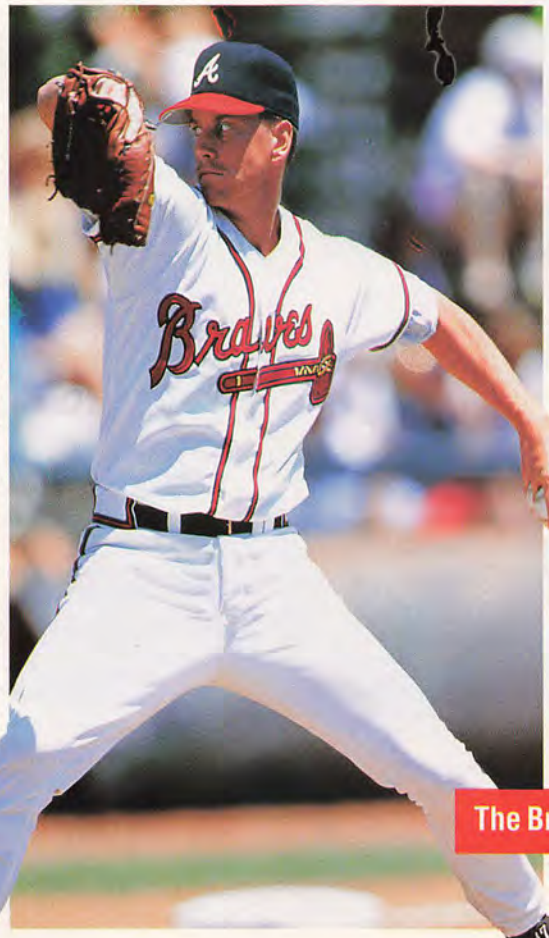
"The World League gives players 10 full games against other pro players," says Bennett, an Australian whom the Chargers sent to the Amsterdam Admirals for the '95 season. "Sometimes when players first come out of college, they find it hard."

But European fans don't look on their league simply as a season-long training camp for the NFL. The league saw an 18-percent increase in attendance from '95 to '96, due in part to exciting games and a hometown flavor. (Each team's roster contains seven "national" players, which would explain the presence of roster filler such as Manfred Burgsmuller of the Rhein Fire.)

"Europeans are intrigued by American football and are keen to learn more," says Bennett. "I think support for the game will increase with knowledge." —*Paul M. Johnson*

STEPHEN DUNN/ALLSPORT

IN & OUT



BOB ROSATO

IN: World Series
OUT: Halloween party at Albert Belle's house

IN: Magic Johnson
OUT: Magic Johnson

IN: Shaq
OUT: Kazaam

IN: Magic Johnson
OUT: Magic Johnson

IN: Clinton's White House
OUT: Cowboys' White House

IN: Magic Johnson
OUT: Magic Johnson

IN: Braves' four aces
OUT: Indians joker Kent Mercker

The Braves' Tom Glavine

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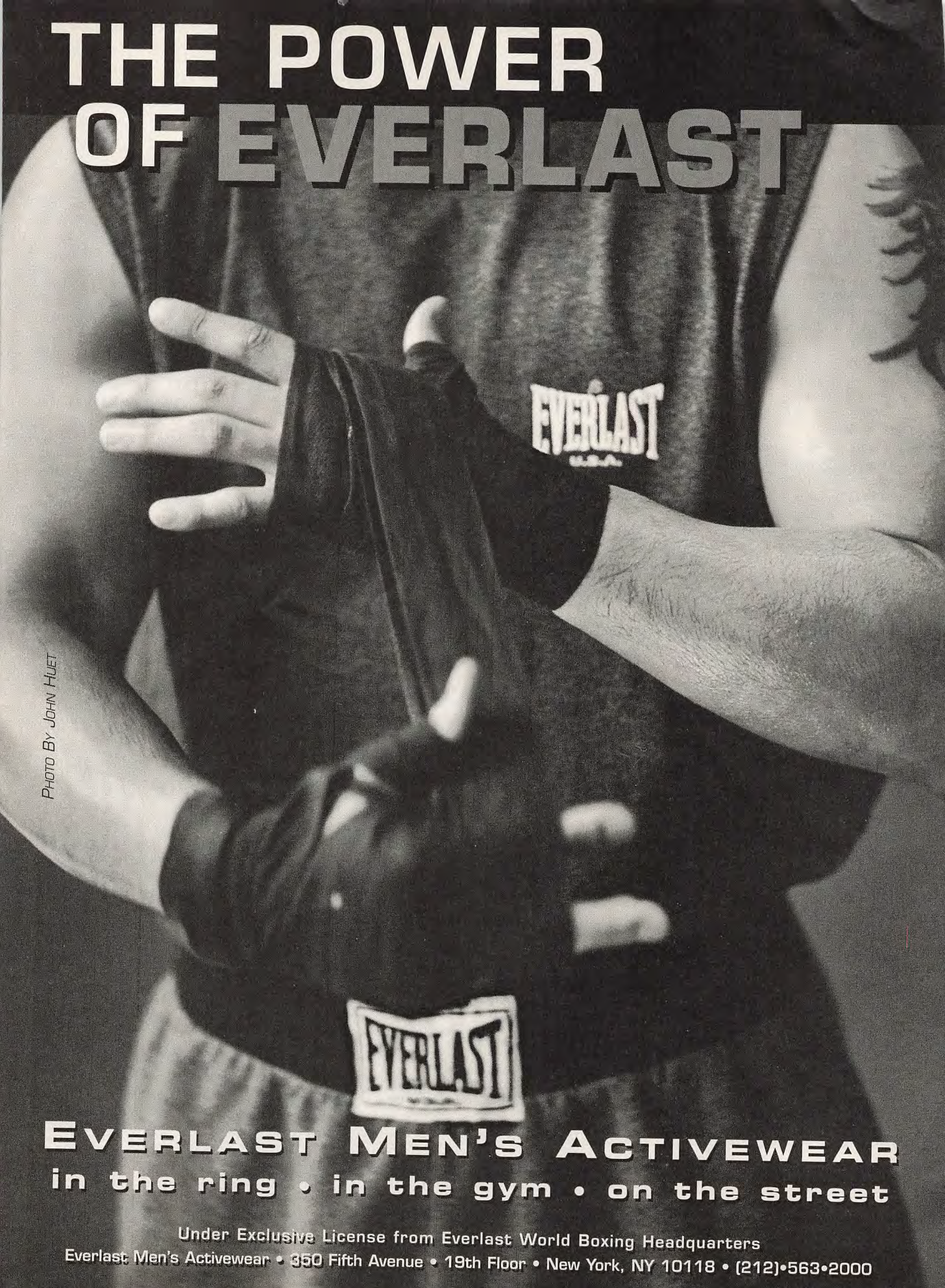
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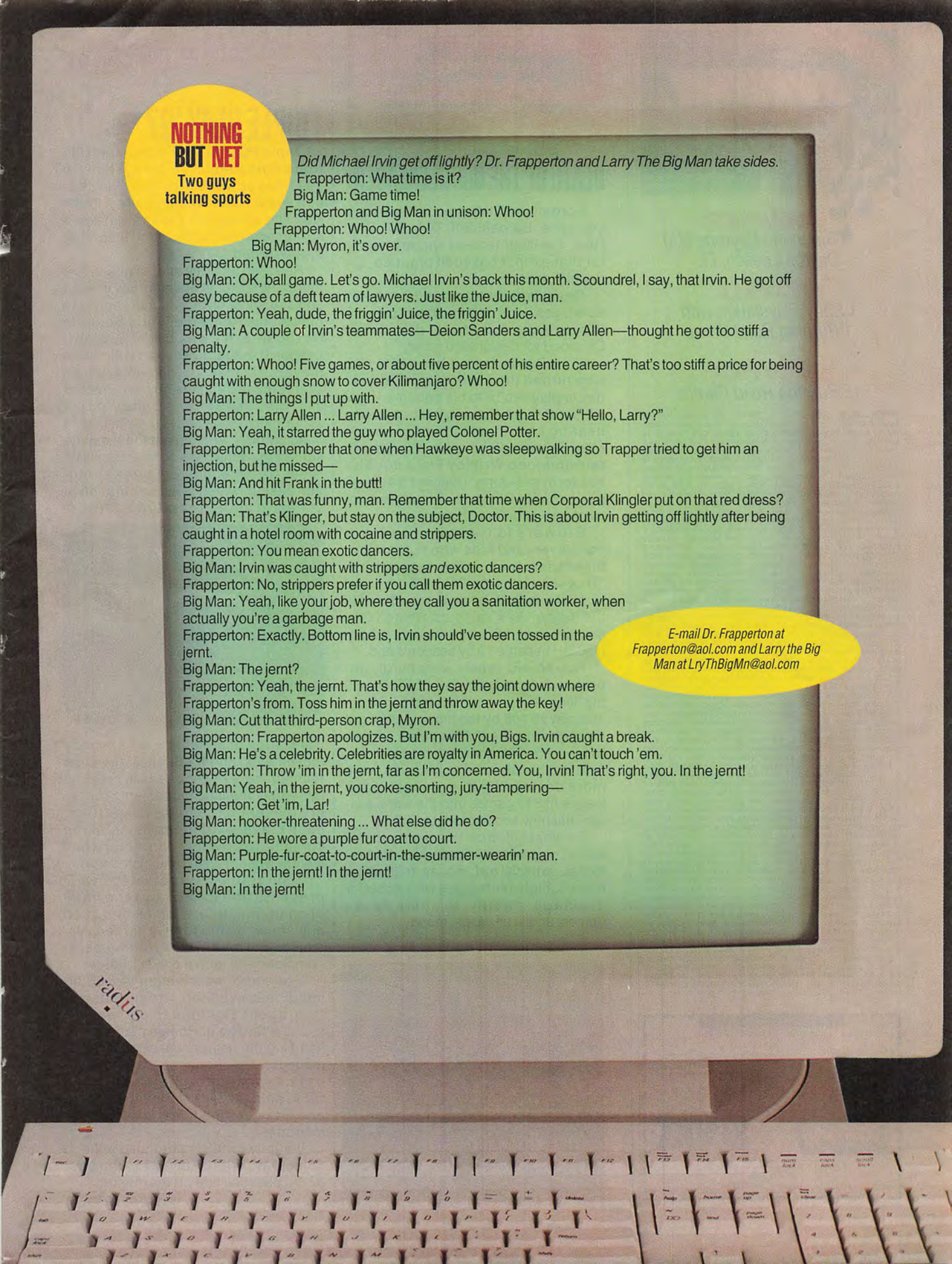
NOTHING BUT NET

Two guys talking sports

Did Michael Irvin get off lightly? Dr. Frapperton and Larry The Big Man take sides.

Frapperton: What time is it?
Big Man: Game time!
Frapperton and Big Man in unison: Whoo!
Frapperton: Whoo! Whoo!
Big Man: Myron, it's over.
Frapperton: Whoo!
Big Man: OK, ball game. Let's go. Michael Irvin's back this month. Scoundrel, I say, that Irvin. He got off easy because of a deft team of lawyers. Just like the Juice, man.
Frapperton: Yeah, dude, the friggin' Juice, the friggin' Juice.
Big Man: A couple of Irvin's teammates—Deion Sanders and Larry Allen—thought he got too stiff a penalty.
Frapperton: Whoo! Five games, or about five percent of his entire career? That's too stiff a price for being caught with enough snow to cover Kilimanjaro? Whoo!
Big Man: The things I put up with.
Frapperton: Larry Allen ... Larry Allen ... Hey, remember that show "Hello, Larry?"
Big Man: Yeah, it starred the guy who played Colonel Potter.
Frapperton: Remember that one when Hawkeye was sleepwalking so Trapper tried to get him an injection, but he missed—
Big Man: And hit Frank in the butt!
Frapperton: That was funny, man. Remember that time when Corporal Klingler put on that red dress?
Big Man: That's Klinger, but stay on the subject, Doctor. This is about Irvin getting off lightly after being caught in a hotel room with cocaine and strippers.
Frapperton: You mean exotic dancers.
Big Man: Irvin was caught with strippers *and* exotic dancers?
Frapperton: No, strippers prefer if you call them exotic dancers.
Big Man: Yeah, like your job, where they call you a sanitation worker, when actually you're a garbage man.
Frapperton: Exactly. Bottom line is, Irvin should've been tossed in the jernt.
Big Man: The jernt?
Frapperton: Yeah, the jernt. That's how they say the joint down where Frapperton's from. Toss him in the jernt and throw away the key!
Big Man: Cut that third-person crap, Myron.
Frapperton: Frapperton apologizes. But I'm with you, Bigs. Irvin caught a break.
Big Man: He's a celebrity. Celebrities are royalty in America. You can't touch 'em.
Frapperton: Throw 'im in the jernt, far as I'm concerned. You, Irvin! That's right, you. In the jernt!
Big Man: Yeah, in the jernt, you coke-snorting, jury-tampering—
Frapperton: Get 'im, Lar!
Big Man: hooker-threatening ... What else did he do?
Frapperton: He wore a purple fur coat to court.
Big Man: Purple-fur-coat-to-court-in-the-summer-wearin' man.
Frapperton: In the jernt! In the jernt!
Big Man: In the jernt!

E-mail Dr. Frapperton at Frapperton@aol.com and Larry the Big Man at LryThBigMn@aol.com



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Trip to the Daytona 500 Daytona Beach, FL

FIRST PRIZE:
1 Sony Playstation with 1 Burning Road Game

SECOND PRIZE:
15 Burning Road Games

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Not responsible for lost, misdirected, damaged, postage due, illegible, late mail, printing or other errors. **3)** Selected entrants will be selected in a random drawing conducted on or about January 3, 1997, from among all eligible entries received, under the supervision of an independent certified public accountant, whose decision shall be final on all matters concerning the sweepstakes drawing. Odds of winning are determined by the total number of eligible entries received. Limit one prize per family or household. All prizes will be awarded. Entries become the property of Petersen Publishing Company and will not be returned. Each entrant consents to the transfer of all information contained on his/her entry form(s) to other companies. Entry constitutes permission to use winner's name and likeness for promotional purposes without added compensation except where prohibited. **4)** Selected entrants will be notified by mail. 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Includes round trip airfare (coach) for two from the airport closest to the winner's residence to Daytona Beach, FL three nights deluxe hotel accommodations (double occupancy), meals, pre-race party, reserved seats at the Daytona 500 and ground transportation to and from the race. Approximate value is $5,000.00. First prize (there is 1 first prize)- One Sony Playstation with 1 Burning Road video game. Approximate retail value is $249.98. Second prize (there are15 second prizes) - Fifteen Burning Road video games. Approximate retail value is $49.95 each. No transfer of prizes allowed. No substitution of any of the prizes except by sweepstakes sponsor (due to prize availability), in which case a prize or prizes of equal or greater value will be awarded. Value of prizes stated in US currency. Transfers and incidentals, other than those previously noted, are at the expense of the winner. All Federal, State, Local, Provincial, Municipal and General Service taxes, duties, licensing and any associated fees are the sole responsibility of each winner. **6)** This sweepstakes is only open to legal residents of the forty-nine (49) United States including the District of Columbia and Canada who are 18 years of age or older as of January 1, 1997, and possess a valid drivers license. Sweepstakes is void in the state of Tennessee and the province of Quebec, Puerto Rico and wherever prohibited by law. Employees (and members of their immediate family) of the following companies are not eligible: Petersen Publishing Company, Sony Entertainment Inc. and Playmates Interactive Entertainment or any agents or affiliates of Petersen Publishing, Sony Entertainment Inc. and Playmates Interactive Entertainment (including immediate family members thereof), are not eligible to participate. All federal, State, Local, Municipal and Provincial laws and regulations apply. 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sport talk

DEATH OF THE DOUBLEHEADER

Forget Joe DiMaggio. Where have you gone, Bargain Bill, Twin Bill, Dual Deal, Twi-Nighter—all snappy names for that extinct baseball practice, the doubleheader.

One ticket, two games 20 minutes apart; yes, kids, the sport actually did this regularly, in those old days before DH stood for designated hitter.

Ernie Banks, the exuberant Mr. Cub who turned the observation "A great day to play two" into his trademark, got whiplash from shaking his head upon hearing Los Angeles third baseman Mike Blowers plead exhaustion after a rain-induced Wrigley Field doubleheader in mid-June. That was a new experience for Blowers, a five-year vet who'd never before played two.

Blowers is typical of today's ballplayers and fans who regard doubleheaders the way DJs regard vinyl: "They used to do that?" In 1996, a grand total of *one* twin-bill was scheduled in the majors. Yes, rainouts created others, just as in '95, when the only scheduled DH became 19 by season's end.

Not-so-old-timers were hardly impressed. As recently as 1967, the 20 big-league teams scheduled 61 DHs—and played *185* by the time weather got through with them. Five years earlier, there were 145 *scheduled* twin-bills. And it's hardly as if schedules were more demanding then; in fact, each league fit 810 games into the same season that now accommodates 1,134.

So what killed off this diamond dodo? In no particular order: jet planes, money, artificial turf, money, marketing, money, high-tech grass with superior drainage, money, in some cases domes, and in all cases, money.

—Tom Singer

SPORT ARCHIVE

VIDEO GAME GUIDE

TRIPLE PLAY '97

Triple Play '97, E/A's baseball title that originated on 16-bit systems in 1995, has arrived on the Sony PlayStation. Known for its abundantly popular NBA Live series, E/A shows it can field a strong team on the diamond as well as the hardwood.

Released after the start of play in '96, this game features opening-day lineups and statistics, giving you the chance to play along during the World Series in October. E/A owns both the Major League Baseball license as well as the players' license for the game, which simply means that the guy who swings and glides like Griffey *is* Griffey and not some impostor named Clutch Robinson or something. And the reason the players resemble the ones on your television is due to something E/A touts as MotionDesign, which is a combination of standard motion capture (software

translation of athletes' real-life body movements) and traditional animation techniques. E/A succeeds in creating incredibly realistic movements for every player on the field. In addition, each player evidences painstaking care put to physical characteristics (height, weight, skin tone, hair color).

Each stadium is recreated in 3-D presentation (check out the half-opened roof of SkyDome), and each player can be found on a screen version of an Upper Deck trading card, complete with actual player photos.

Every optional element you could imagine is available, from trades to free-agent signings to player creations. Play Pro or Rookie mode, or try handling things from the dugout as the manager. Other options you might not have expected: a choice between rock, acid jazz, or roots music style and a sky setting (clear, overcast or random).

Visually grabbing but also solid in gameplay, Triple Play '97 is the best 32-bit baseball title on the market.

—Paul M. Johnson

Go for a spin. Or burn up the road.

There are two kinds of people in the world. Those who wear pink. And those who see red. If you're in the second category, you know other racing games just aren't up to speed. So hit the Burning Road.™

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So trash the tutu and strap on a helmet. Because with Burning Road, you're an accident waiting to happen ...but not for long.

http://www.playmatestoys.com

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Piece of Cake: Grow to be 6-foot-6, shave your head and work on your vertical and maybe you, too, can grace the cover of SPORT Magazine 20 times. Michael Jordan, pictured on this month's cover, is shown here in our commemorative 50th-anniversary issue, photographed by Bill Smith. Thanks also to Allsport and Bettmann Photos for their 50th-anniversary cover contributions.

HOLE-IN-ONE

Ron Shelton, the director of such highly acclaimed sports movies as *Bull Durham*, *White Men Can't Jump* and *Cobb*, has a record for generating movies that makes him an All-Star in both Hollywood and the world of sports.

Shelton's latest creation, *Tin Cup*, with Kevin Costner in the starring role of Roy "Tin Cup" McAvoy, was one of the summer's biggest box-office hits among sports-themed movies. His secret? Simple. Create a movie that "appeals to half the people in America who are golf fanatics and to the other half who believe that golf is the dumbest sport ever created," says Shelton.

COURTESY WB/MONARCHY ENT.

Perhaps another key ingredient to Shelton's sports movies is his attention to detail and accuracy of environment. A screenwriter as well as a director, Shelton researches his characters well, making them endearing to the audience by incorporating the details that help fans accept both the characters and the plot of the movie.

Cameo appearances have contributed to the success of Shelton's movies as well. In *Blue Chips*, a script originally penned by Shelton, Shaquille O'Neal, Penny Hardaway and Larry Bird helped sell the film. In *Tin Cup*, a wealth of golfing PGA elite do likewise.

"We needed to put Kevin Costner in the same frame with real golfers in real golf situations," says Shelton. "We used real pro caddies, driving-range coaches and recognizable sports figures. When you see Kevin hit a shot, it's the real thing."

—Randy Williams

IS HOCKEY STILL CANADA'S SPORT?

They're still getting up in the early morning hours to play the sport on frozen ponds in Flin Flon and Medicine Hat and Red Deer and all those other quaint Canadian places that sound as if they belong in a Dr. Seuss book. And no matter which NHL roster you look at, you'll find that most of the players are still from our neighboring country up north.

But if you take a look at the trend developing in the NHL, the game once dubbed by a Canadian journalist as "our national sport 'til death do us part" is becoming more and more American.

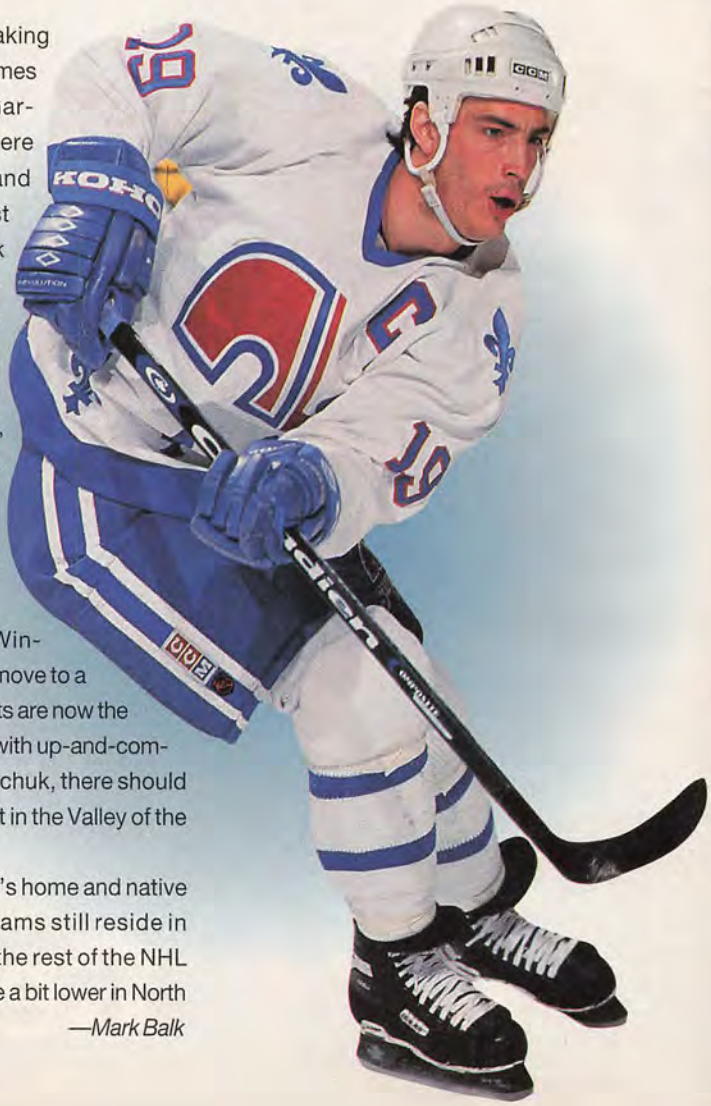
Start by looking at the Stanley Cup, the most precious piece of hardware in professional sports. The defending-champion Colorado Avalanche? Last we checked, they were the Quebec Nordiques, archrivals of the owners of 23 Cups, the Montreal Canadiens. Well, the Avalanche play the Canadiens just twice a year now, and they didn't exactly suffer by sweeping the Florida Panthers and becoming the first franchise in league history to win it all in its first season in a new city.

Meanwhile, after taking the first two playoff games at Madison Square Garden, the Canadiens were beaten four straight and knocked out in the first round by the New York Rangers. The only other playoff team up north, the Toronto Maple Leafs, were also out after the first round, losing to the St. Louis Blues. No playoff hockey games played on Canadian ice after one round, eh?

And then there's Winnipeg, which chose to move to a warmer climate. The Jets are now the Phoenix Coyotes, and with up-and-coming stars like Keith Tkachuk, there should be plenty of excitement in the Valley of the Sun.

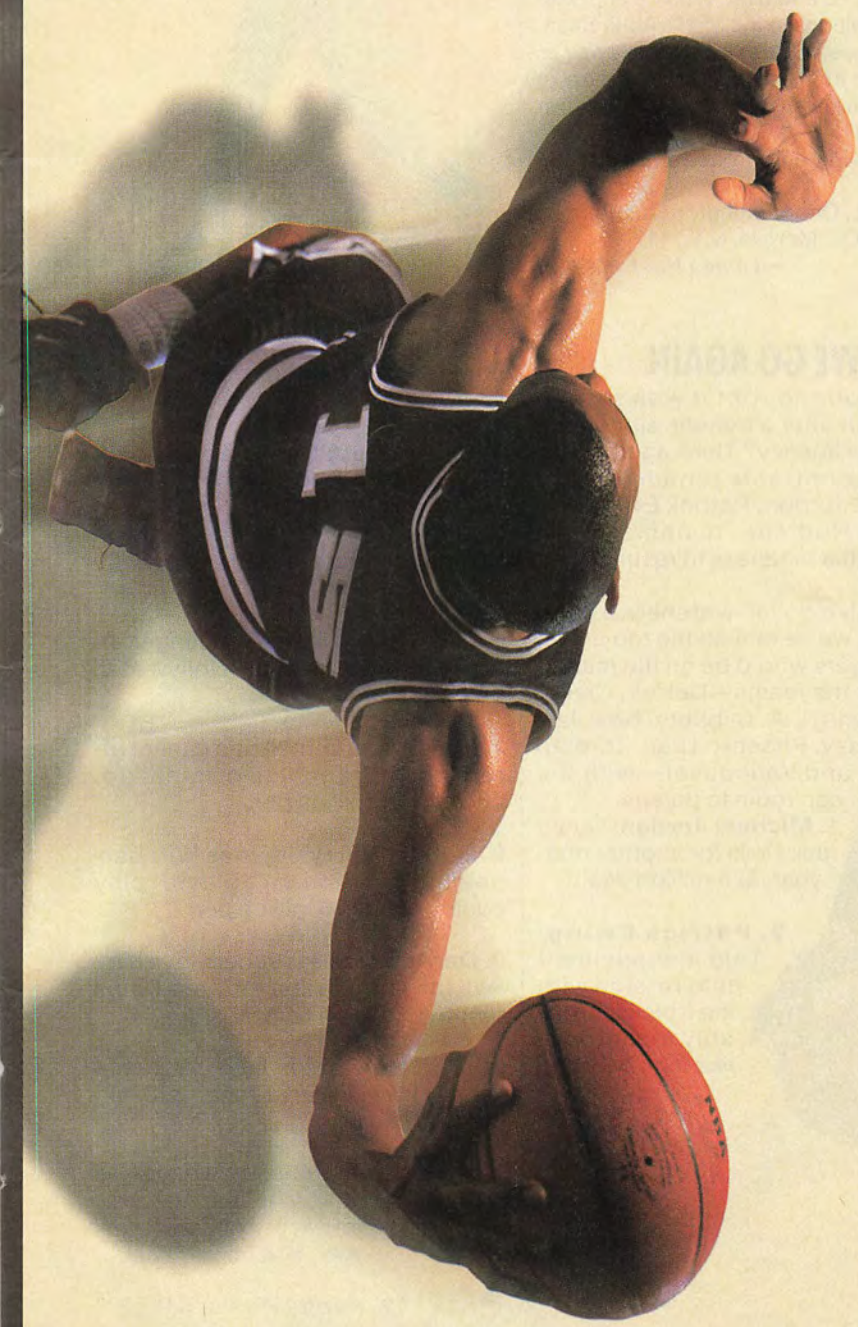
O' Canada, hockey's home and native land? Well, six pro teams still reside in Canada, but in 1996, the rest of the NHL and the Stanley Cup live a bit lower in North America.

—Mark Balk



R. LABERGE/BRUCE BENNETT

We Got Game.



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SENIOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

What do Ron LeFlore, Jose Cardenal, Jim Barr and Bob Oliver have in common? They're former major-league standouts who still play, now starring in the Men's Senior Baseball League, which provides an outlet for individuals age 30 and older to participate in America's pastime.

For Steve Sigler, a Long Island, N.Y., resident, baseball was not merely a sport but a passion, so in 1986 he advertised for older men who shared his sentiments. He mustered enough heads for four teams, and the league was born.

The initial success of "30 and over" baseball led Sigler to draw up variations to standard baseball rules, with the aging bodies in mind. For instance, courtesy runners for injured players are allowed, as well as a 10-man minimum batting order.

The MSBL is not only a place where old men keep young diamond dreams alive. It also wants to contribute to the community and thus has established links with Babe Ruth League Baseball and the Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Since 1986, MSBL has steadily grown. Current data shows 2,700 teams, 40,000 players and 280 local leagues nationwide and in the Virgin Islands.

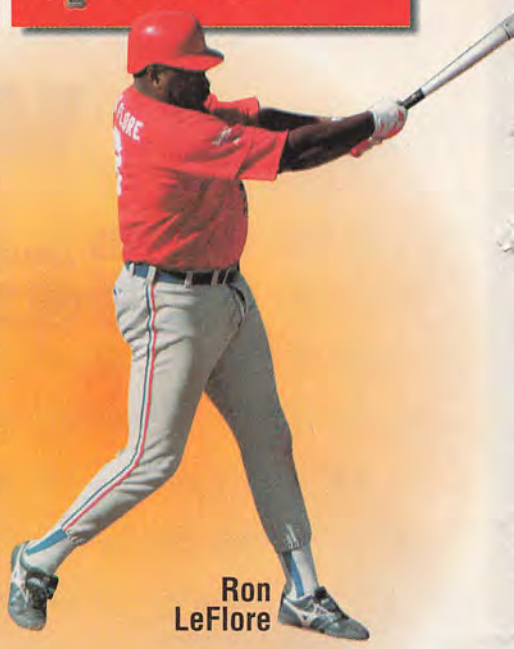
At the eighth annual World Series, played in Phoenix, there were four divisions: 30 and over, 40 and over, 50 and over and 18 and over. (The 18 and over crowd belongs to the Men's Adult Baseball League.) Entries from as far away as Holland and Canada showed up to match their prowess with 236 other teams. The 1996 Series will again be played in Phoenix, from Oct. 28 through Nov. 9.

MSBL, One Huntington Quadrangle, Suite 3NO7, Melville, N.Y., 11747.

—Linnea Hunt-Stewart

DENEVI/JONES PHOTOGRAPHY

sport talk



Ron LeFlore

HERE WE GO AGAIN

So you thought it was safe to come out after a frenetic summer of NBA free agency? Think again.

With contracts running out on Michael Jordan, Patrick Ewing and Dennis Rodman, to name a few, look for the madness to resume next July.

To give dollar-watchers a head start, we've ranked the top dozen players who'd be on the market for the teams—Detroit, Cleveland, L.A. Clippers, New Jersey, Phoenix, Utah, Toronto and Vancouver—with the cap room to pursue.

1. Michael Jordan: Could ask Bulls for another one-year, $25 million deal.

2. Patrick Ewing: Told management he'd re-sign with the Knicks, probably for Jordan-like money.

3. Kevin Johnson: Says he's retiring after '96-97 season despite making $7 million this year.

4. Sean Elliott: Needs a big playoff to land a bigger contract.

5. Cliff Robinson: Wants a Juwan Howard contract (seven years, $100 million) that no one's ready to give.

6. Dennis Rodman: Gunslinger for hire. One-year deal or "Hollywood, here I come."

7. Nick Anderson: Magic cannot afford to let franchise original go. Look for $7 million per.

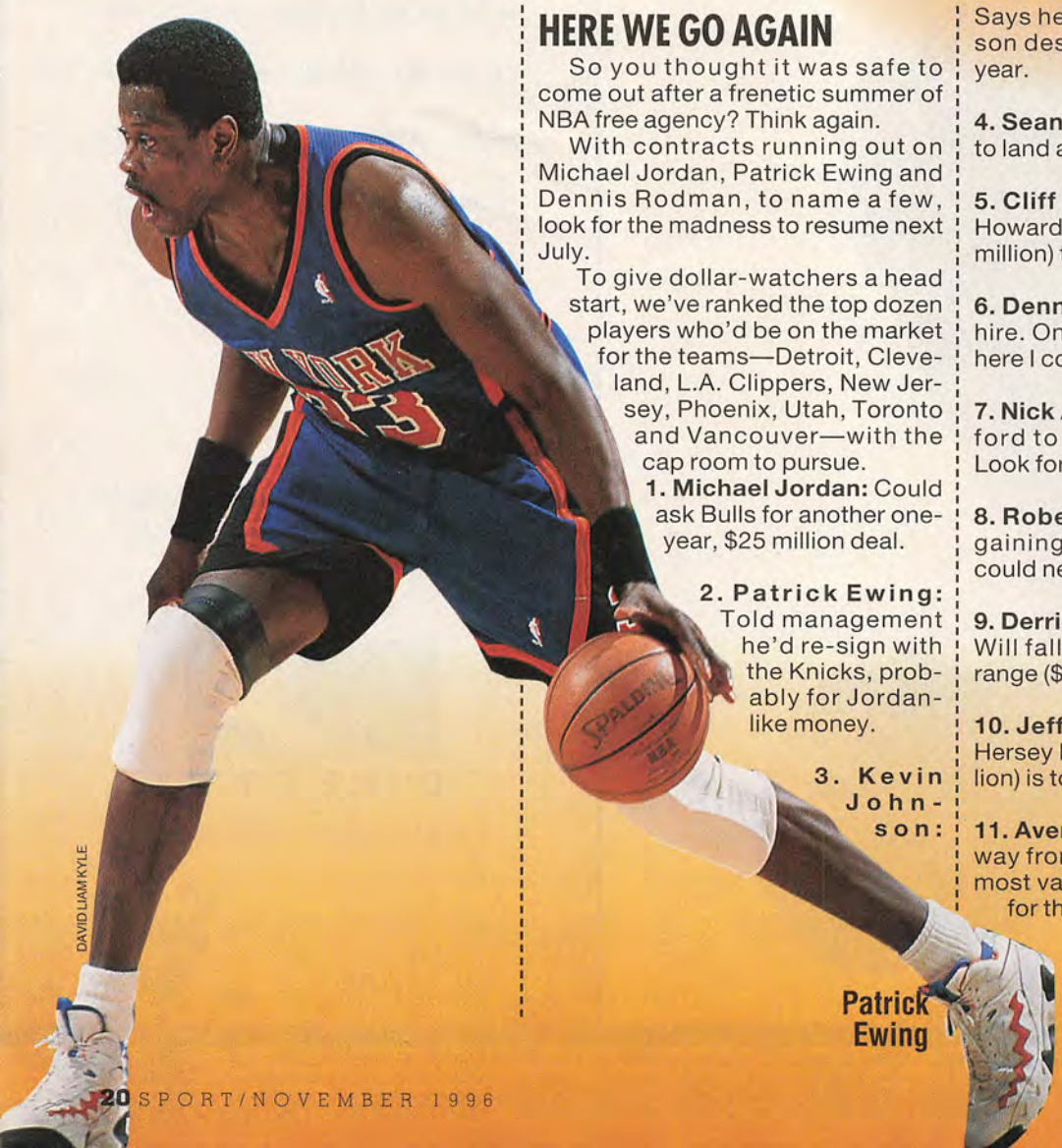
8. Robert Horry: Injuries hurt bargaining position, but playoff play could net him $6 million per.

9. Derrick McKey: Pacers love him. Will fall in the Dale/Antonio Davis range ($6 million per).

10. Jeff Hornacek: Is to Jazz what Hersey Hawkins (five years, $30 million) is to Sonics.

11. Avery Johnson: Has worked his way from Spurs' 12th man to third-most valuable player on team. Look for three-year, $15 million deal.

12. Bobby Phills: If Bryant Stith got $4.4 million per, the Cavs better prepare to pay. *—Darryl Howerton*



Patrick Ewing

DAVID LIAM KYLE

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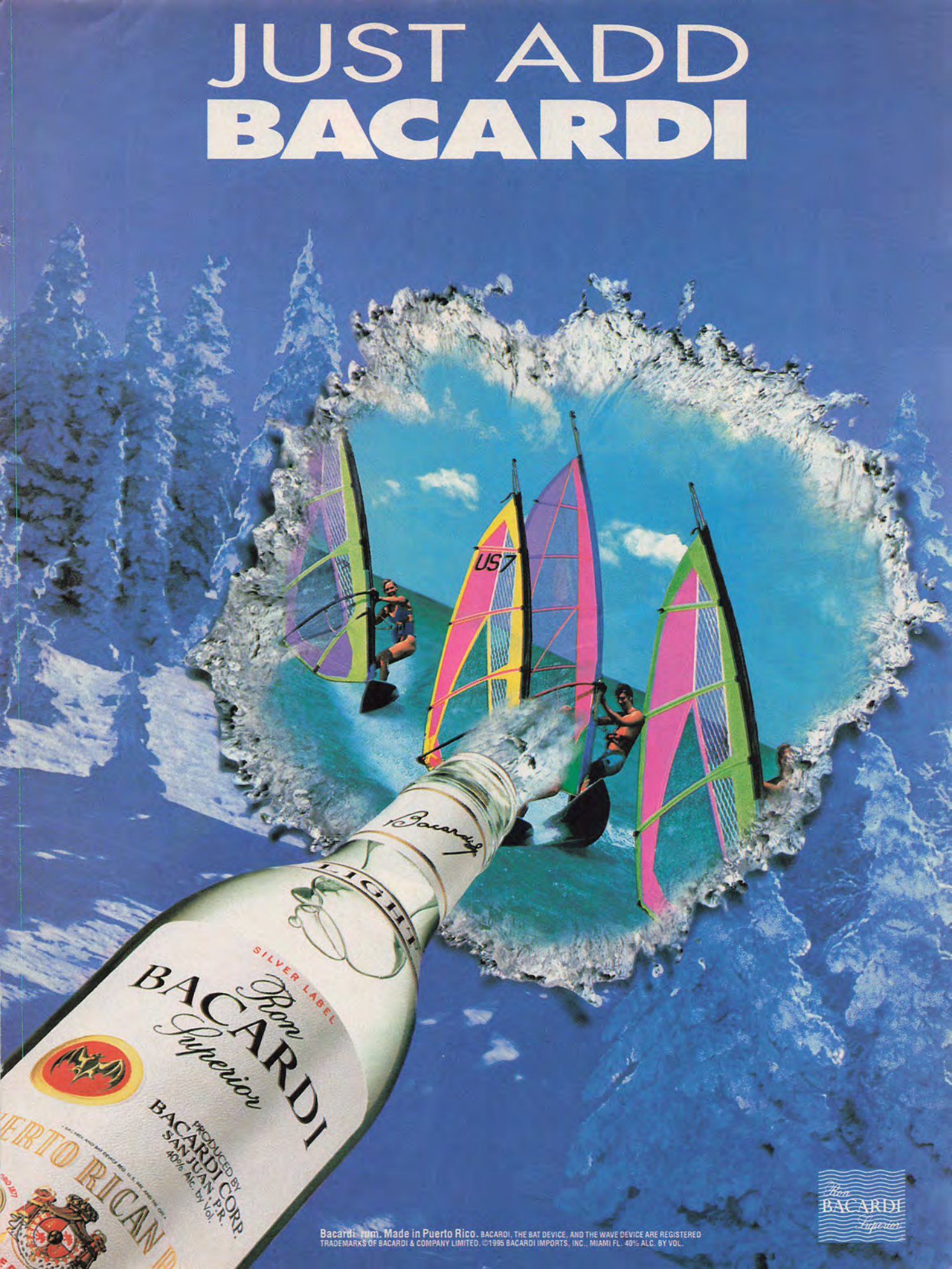

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ALBERT BELLE

"Albert, can you talk for—"

"No"

By Paul M. Johnson

A Philadelphia taxi bearing Albert Belle pulls up behind Veteran's Stadium the day before the 1996 All-Star game. Instantly, a band of autograph-seeking kids converges—the media should have such courage—thrusting pens and paper as the surly Cleveland Indians slugger climbs out. They're seasoned in signature-seeking etiquette: "Will you sign please, Mister Belle?"

He looks none of them in the face, takes no pen, offers no excuses. He carves a path toward the doors leading into the stadium. Although I've been on his heels for an interview for six months now, I still have yet to hear one unabbreviated sentence—not even on television—from the pursed lips of the man who became baseball's first player ever to reach the five-oh mark in both doubles and dingers in a single campaign. The last question I posed him some months prior elicited four words, three of them "no."

It had been more than a year since that first time I endeavored to speak with Belle. It was in Oakland for a weekend series, and I approached him prior to a game, optimistically chasing a verbalized thought or two on the topic of his dominant team. His notoriety as a media-menacing, expletive-spewing bundle of intensity was only a rumor to me at the time. I embarked upon the shirtless Belle as he sat hunched over on a stool, pulling on a sock.

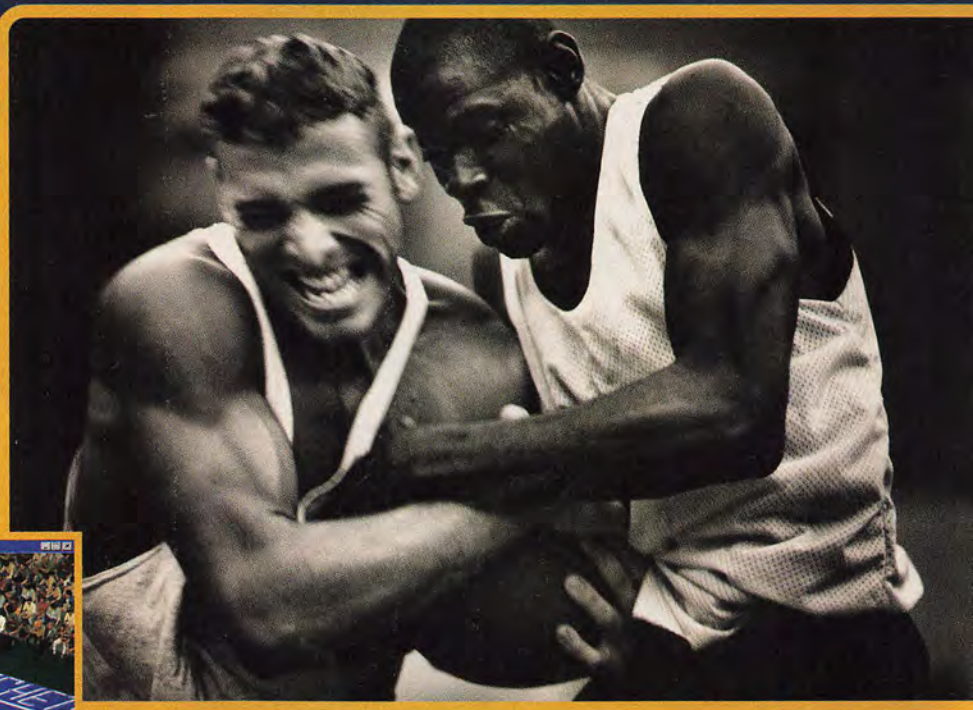
"Albert, can you talk for—"

"No," he said sternly but not loudly, without looking up.

TOM DEFACE

You've always been a tad

TOO COMPETITIVE AT HOOPS.



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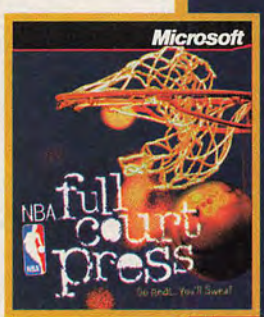

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I persisted. "How 'bout another time during this weekend?"

He stood and turned his head toward me, but stopped just short of eye contact. "No means no!" he bellowed, commanding looks from a few of his teammates.

I knew the meaning of the word no, having been taught it some years earlier by my father. I left him alone for the entire series, as did all other members of the media.

It is the same here in Philadelphia for baseball's All-Star game. Although the media contingent numbers 1,300 and certain players cannot walk the length of a Louisville Slugger without being met with notepad or microphone, Belle is isolated. (Perhaps he is envied by his All-Star colleagues.)

While waiting in a dugout for the National League to conclude its workout-day batting practice, the most esteemed members of the American League are queried and photographed. Belle, grinning and chatting with a couple of his interim mates, is not confronted. Moses never saw a parting like that which precedes Belle; journalists, many of them sedentary slabs due to an eternity of stadium food, still spring gracefully from his route.

Everyone, it seems, has an opinion about Belle, so I go fishing in the enemy clubhouse.

"He's established himself and you've got to respect what he wants," says a gracious Expo, Mark Grudzielanek, playing in his first midsummer classic and accommodating every media request all the while.

"Albert has his way of getting ready for games," says a cordial Jeff Bagwell. "If that's the way Albert does it, then I've got to respect it."

"I don't think Albert has any responsibility to be a certain way," says Barry Larkin, who obliges me and my questions despite hustling to leave. "Albert's responsibility is to be the way Albert wants to be."

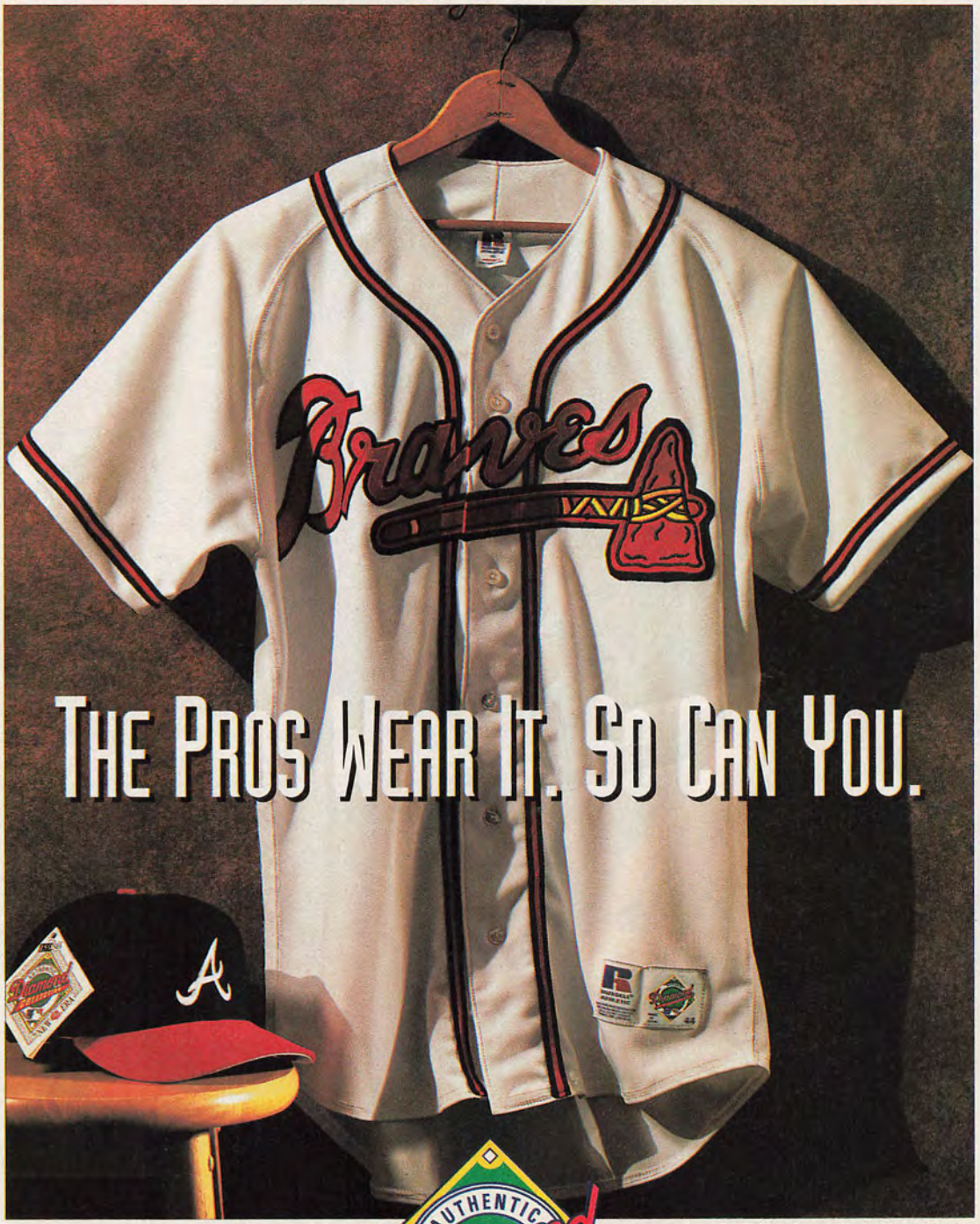
The greenest of the National Leaguers, only 70 games into his big-league career, is 22-year-old Pirates catcher Jason Kendall, who nonetheless exhibits a suave knowledge of his new fraternity—that of major-league baseball players: "You're not going to find anyone saying anything bad about him."

I somehow knew that. Maybe a postgame visit to the American League clubhouse will offer better insight. Maybe it won't.

I find myself, with the rest of the media, lingering while the junior circuit feeds from

"I don't think there's a guy in this room who has a problem with Belle who doesn't have a pen and notepad in front of him."
—The Twins' Chuck Knoblauch

BOB ROSATO



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WHAT A GAME

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I knew the meaning of the word no, having been taught it some years earlier by my father. I left him alone for the entire series, as did all other members of the media.

a bountiful spread the sorrows of a 6-0 loss. Belle, sitting with elbows on table next to Jay Buhner, hovers over his food, looking up occasionally only to ominously scan the landscape of the hovering mob; perhaps he can sense fear. On his T-shirt reads the phrase, "Man Know Thyself." I'm able to recall this axiom and one particularly appropriate reply to it intellectualized by French poet and philosopher Paul Valery: "To know oneself is not necessarily to improve oneself."

If Belle does indeed "know himself" (I won't be the one to ask), he hasn't necessarily improved himself. Not in the weighty yet uncertain category of image, anyway. After being beaten out by Mo Vaughn in last year's AL MVP balloting incontestably due to his prickly persona, Belle was affected enough with the fans' impressions that he devised an off-season strategy of altering them (after, of course, a spirited Halloween pursuit of egg-hurling teens that drew yet more negative media attention). Belle, who is involved in numerous charities in Cleveland and his hometown of Shreveport, La., took pictures with children at a chocolate factory, submitted a Christmas poem to a local newspaper (that ran front page) and, perhaps most significant, indulged a handful of interview requests.

The media honeymoon ended, however, one day early in spring training after an article appeared that didn't abide by the tenets laid out by Belle's twin brother, Terry, who had earlier been enlisted to help take on the immense cargo associated with image repair. I had been planning—after getting a conditional half-promise from Terry—for an interview the following day. Oh well, I had other things to do in Florida, anyway.

Chuck Knoblauch, whose locker for these two days is next to Belle's, becomes available and, in response to my curiosity, subtly identifies the meat of the issue: "I don't think there's a guy in this room who has a problem with Belle who doesn't have a pen and notepad in front of him," he says. "I have no problem with him. We talk. He says hello to me at second base."

Belle, who apologists argue is simply being profoundly intense, would actually talk to an opponent during a game? While in scoring position? Perhaps he really does mistrust and abhor us, but he surely has us at his whim.

Unquestioned, unbothered, and consequently unfettered, Belle quickly dresses, extends some brief farewells and is gone. ★

DAVID N. SEELIG

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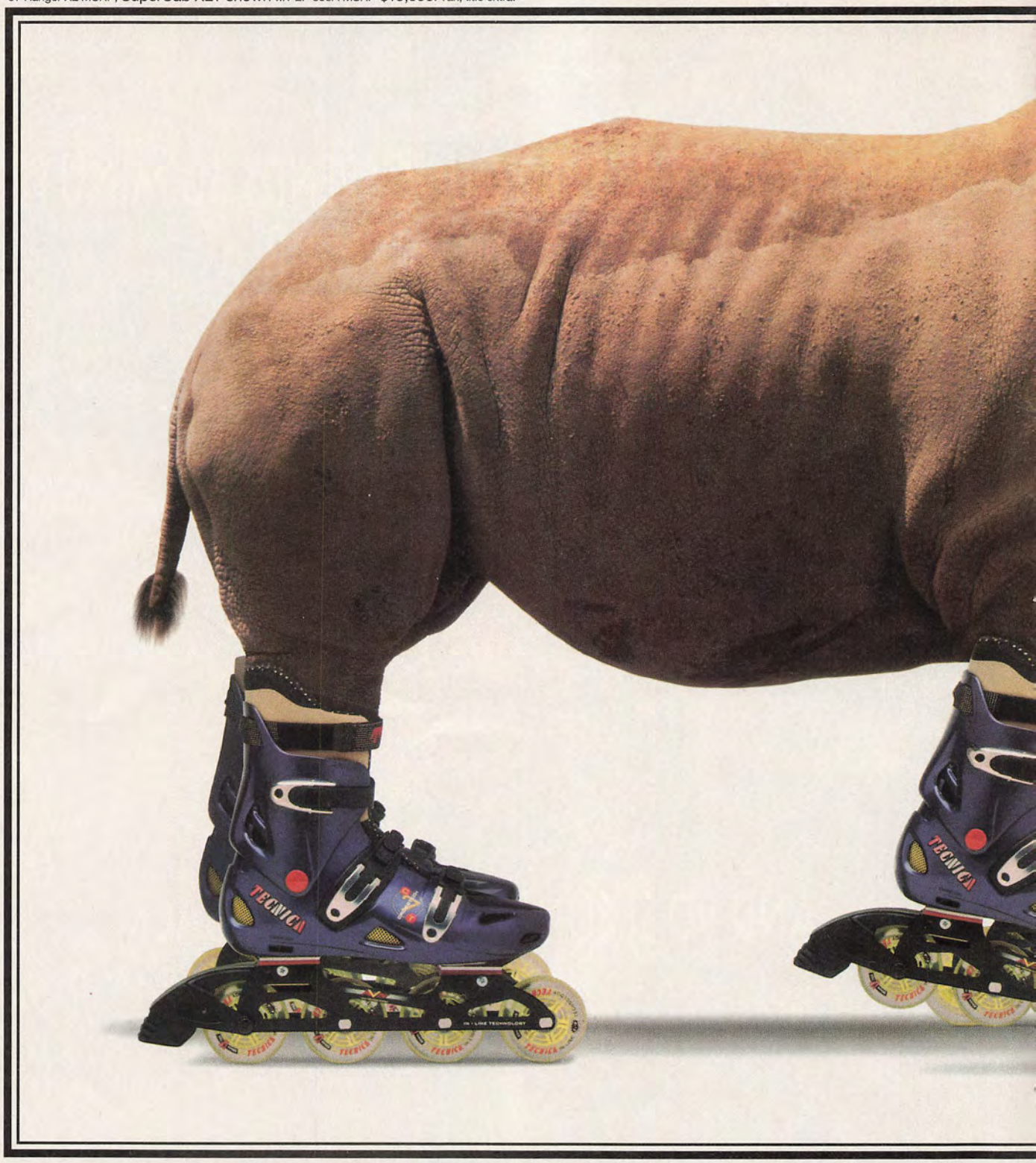

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OUR BASIC CONCEPT.

Get smart...about Brushbacks and Clichés

By Jeff Weinstock

What's the latest gripe with baseball?

Men, not an especially literate clan, police themselves with unwritten rules. You never ogle a friend's sister. At poker, you don't check and raise. No hugging. On the baseball field, you never show up the opposition. If you do so, baseball has a way of dealing with you. As old as eye black, the beanball has always had an unfortunate place in the game's penal code, understood as follows:

Any unnecessary piling on, stat-padding or overt attempts to belittle the opposing team will be avenged by the offended team's pitcher forthwith.

A bit medieval, certainly, but at least it was sensibly executed. Stealing a base in the eighth inning with an 11-0 lead would be grounds for a reprisal. That's how it was anyway. It may be time to start writing the rules down, judging from what provoked brushback pitches this just-concluded season. Back in June, Texas' Lou Frazier bunted for a base hit with the Rangers up 8-3 over the Red Sox in the eighth inning at Fenway. Such gall! His next time at bat, the following inning, Frazier was hit by a pitch from Boston pitcher Eric Gunderson. Frazier charged the mound. (Unwritten rule No. 823: Never walk away from a beaning.) Then came the compulsory brawl, which comes to nothing other than getting the bullpen catcher some field time.

DAVID LIAM KYLE

Texas-Boston is the most representative case, though there are plenty others to demonstrate how the definition of showing up the opposition has narrowed. Players are getting thrown at for what traditionally would be called good baseball. Frazier's offense was trying to ice a game in Fenway Park, to which a five-run lead is an aperitif. Better the Rangers had taken called strikes until a bases-filled, broken-bat pop fly by Jose Canseco cleared the Green Monster and drew Boston within one run? In effect, we have an outlawing of killer instinct.

As for the use of beanballs as retribution for the previous batter's sins, whether a tape-measure home run or a wise-ass bunt, there's never been anything manly in it. You'd think the manlier thing would just be to get the next guy out.

What are some new sports clichés?

"Focused" is a recent one, popularized by Pat Riley. *We gotta stay focused. We lost our focus tonight.* Nobody concentrates anymore. Everyone focuses. During baseball's postseason, we are sure to be reintroduced to the "must-win" game. Game 2 is always a must-win. If you need four to advance, how is Game 2 a must-win? Never mind.

Now that he is retiring, you hear a lot of "Ozzie Smith is arguably the best-ever fielding shortstop." Arguably.

This may sound excessively fussy, but everything is arguably. Nothing, no matter how unopen to debate, is ever clearly, obviously, undoubtedly, certainly, absolutely positively, or this: inarguably. Ozzie Smith is arguably the best fielding shortstop ever? Who would argue that? He won 13 Gold Gloves. He had more range than a rolled-out tarp.

Here's a personal favorite: Michael Jordan is arguably the world's best basketball player. Sure, and the earth arguably orbits the sun. Arguably, sugar is sweet, grass is green, and if I pour hot coffee on myself, I will arguably get burned.

I'm not certain what the purpose is in hedging these crystal-clear verities. There's a distinct chord of sensitivity training in it—space has to be left for differing points of view. Sure, Ozzie Smith is a terrific fielder, but maybe, oh, Mark Belanger is the best defensive shortstop ever. Who's to say? as they say. How about I say it. Ozzie Smith is the best defensive shortstop ever. Some things just are.

Now, some things *are* arguable. Emmitt Smith is arguably the best running back. Barry Sanders is arguably as good as Emmitt Smith. Ken Griffey is arguably the best outfielder in baseball. So is Barry Bonds. Arguably is arguably the most overused word in the lexicon of sports. No argument there. ★

TOM DIPACE

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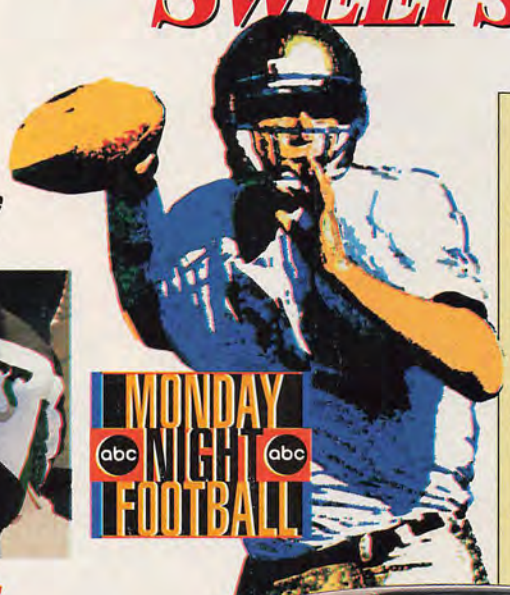

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First Prize (there is one first prize) Trip for two to the 31st annual NFL Championship Game in New Orleans, LA January 26, 1997, includes round trip airfare (coach) for two from the airport closest to the winner's residence to New Orleans, LA. three nights deluxe hotel accommodations (double occupancy), meals, pre-game party, reserved seats at the championship game and ground transportation to and from the game. Maximum retail value is $5,000.00. Second Prize (there are twenty second prizes) Pro-Player NFL team jackets. Approximate retail value is $110.00. Third Prize (there are twenty third prizes) 12 month subscription to SPORT Magazine. Approximate retail value is $19.95. No transfer of the prizes is allowed. No substitution of any of the prizes except by sweepstakes sponsor (due to prize availability), in which case a prize or prizes of equal or greater value will be awarded. Value of prizes stated in U.S. currency. 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HOW TO ENTER: 1) Answer each of the three questions above by writing in the your answer on the appropriate game date. Only one answer per question. **2)** Fill out this official entry form with your complete name and address (no P.O. boxes). **3) Cut out the entry form and send it in or mail to: "Get Into The Game II Sweepstakes", P.O. Box 3303 , St. Cloud, MN 56397-3303.**

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No.2 10/7:_____ 10/14:_____ 10/21:_____ 10/28:_____

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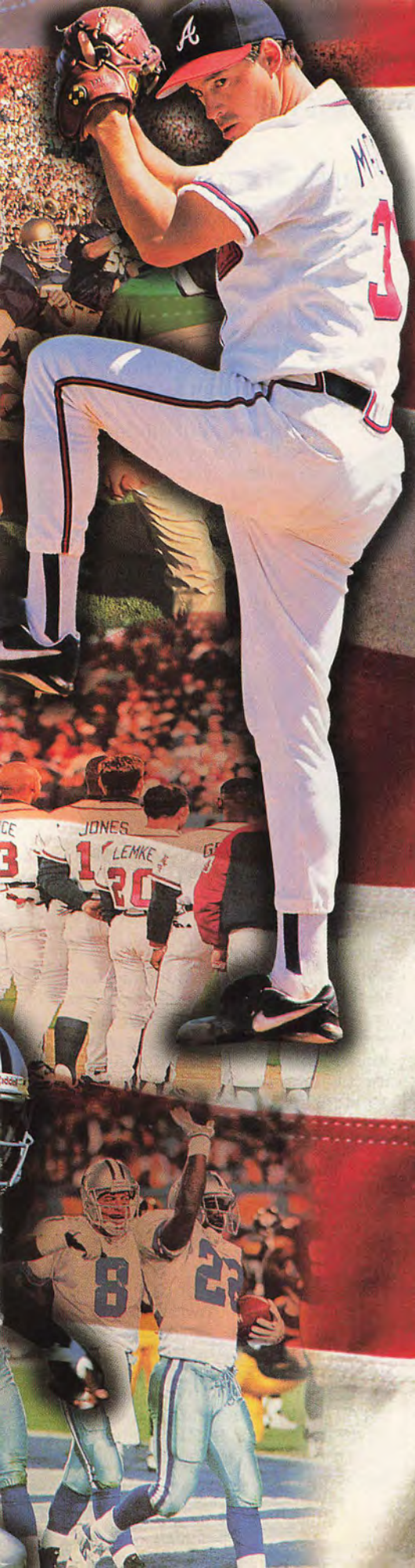

WE CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF THE COWBOYS, BULLS, BRAVES AND FIGHTING IRISH/By Darryl Howerton

AMERICA'S TEAMS

MICHAEL JORDAN BY MICHAEL C. HEBERT/SPURLOCK PHOTOGRAPHY. DEION SANDERS BY MICKEY PFLEGER. NOTRE DAME BY BRIAN SPURLOCK. ATLANTA BRAVES BY ROB TRINGALI JR./SPORTSCHROME. GREG MADDUX BY GREG ABRAMOWITZ. DALLAS COWBOYS BY JON SOOHOO. PHOTO COMPOSITION: JOHN JUDY

TWENTY-FIVE JOURNALISTS ARMED WITH MINICAMS, tape recorders and notepads form a huddle around Emmitt Smith as he fields mundane questions in the center of the Dallas Cowboys' locker room.

"Emmitt, how was practice?"

"How are the hamstrings?"

"Emmitt, how's Deion adjusting to the role of receiver?"

Across the way stands Troy Aikman, who has a similar-sized and equally quote-hungry contingent surrounding him. Five men stand in Aikman's face, close enough to feel the quarterback's every breath. Five more men stand behind those five. Five more behind those five. Five behind those five. And, mercifully, only five more behind those five.

Five rows of five, furiously scribbling, filming, listening to Aikman's every word, spoken oh-so-cautiously.

"I think that's one thing that makes the Braves appealing as opposed to the Cowboys. We're not a crazy team, we're not a team of troublemakers or egos." —*Tom Glavine*

One locker room. Two men talking. Fifty men listening.

E.F. Hutton lives.

Now consider that the above took place, not during Super Bowl week, but during a simple three-day minicamp in June. In the middle of the offseason. Five months after the '95 season ended and three months before the '96 season began!

Twenty-five journalists around Emmitt, 25 more around Troy, and still 25 more trying to chase down Deion Sanders, who is probably making his getaway in his customized Mercedes Benz golf cart. Even the equipment boy is holding court with a reporter.

All this begs the question: What could possibly be so important here, guys? It's just a practice!

Welcome to a day in the life of one of America's Teams. In this case, we're speaking of the originators of the catchphrase, the Cowboys, but we just as easily could be discussing basketball's Chicago Bulls, baseball's Atlanta Braves or college football's Notre Dame Fighting Irish.

WHY, LOOK, THERE'S DENNIS RODman of the Bulls, regaling about his latest shopping spree at Frederick's of Hollywood.

And over there, that looks like man-of-the-moment John Smoltz, telling tales of an earlier Braves era, back when they called themselves America's Team and lost 106 games in the process.

And lookie here. It's youngster Ron Powlus, having to tell yet another reporter that Joe Montana, Joe Theismann and Rick Mirer don't attend classes at Notre Dame anymore and, therefore, don't affect the way he plays, so enough about them already.

The Boys, the Bulls, the Braves, the Blue and Gold. Each knows it can never escape the microscope, no matter the city, no matter the season, no matter the setting.

"The reason these teams are followed so closely is plain and simple," says Fox TV spokesman Vince Wladika, whose network contributes to the intense coverage. "If you win *and* have the ability to have something that makes you a consistent draw, you can be one of America's Teams."

Credentials and coverage—the Cowboys, Bulls, Braves and Irish have plenty of both.

- **Cowboys credentials:** three Super Bowls in the '90s; **coverage:** Fox and ABC, where Dallas dominates most NFL players (41 at the moment); **coverage:** one-of-a-kind deal with NBC Sports, the only network with an exclusive contract to televise a university's entire 11-game schedule.

JESSEN ASSOCIATES

Which team is most popular? Based on TV ratings, Emmitt and the Boys stand out in the crowd.

Sunday morning and Monday night ratings the way "Friends" dominates Thursdays.

- **Bulls credentials:** four NBA championships in the '90s; **coverage:** NBC, TNT and WGN, where the team is seen by between two and 18 million households about 100 times a year.
- **Braves credentials:** three World Series appearances and one championship in the '90s; **coverage:** Fox, ESPN and the TBS Superstation, which nationally televises all 162 Braves games.
- **Fighting Irish credentials:** Associated Press' No. 1-ranked team of all time, a top-six squad five times in the last eight seasons, the 1988 national champs and the school producing the

Pundits across the nation have compared the travel of America's Teams to rock-and-roll tours, but Pearl Jam, Metallica and Billboard's next flavor-of-the-month never attracted the media entourage these guys do.

"The thing about our team," says the Cowboys' Deion Sanders, "you could go up to a kid and ask him to name our 11 defensive players and he could probably name eight. If you asked me to name guys on some of the other teams in this league, I couldn't name two. People know everyone on our offense, even our line. Man, Nate Newton is Hollywood!"

And if Nate's Hollywood, what does that make Michael Jordan? Nobody has owned the industry airwaves the way MJ has. Check the numbers Jordan has helped inspire: The TV ratings for the Bulls' 1996 and 1993 NBA Finals appearances rank first and second all time. His March 10, 1995, comeback game on NBC was the highest-rated regular-season contest in 20 years, more than doubling the network's average for its games without Jordan in the 1994-95 season. His regular-season games broadcast on TNT consistently draw twice the audience of the network's typical game, picking up an average of one million additional households.

Michael making the big bucks for General Electric (which owns NBC) and TNT's Ted Turner—as if Turner didn't have enough to be happy with. The cable network's owner, who also happens to own baseball's version of America's Team, the Braves, just made $6.5 billion in his network's merger with Time Warner. Such so-called risky investments in the '80s (CNN, the Braves, the Superstation) have reaped nothing but ripe fruit in the '90s.

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"The magnitude of being a part of the Bulls is great, but worldwide, by no means is there any comparison to the Dream Team." —*Scottie Pippen*

Remember, it was in 1985 when Turner began an ad campaign on his WTBS Superstation branding his Braves "America's Team" because of their 162-game national coverage. This despite the Braves' continual finishes at the bottom of the National League West standings.

Eleven years later, after growing into the label, it's the Braves who have gotten the last laugh.

"In the late '80s, there were barely 10,000 fans at Fulton County Stadium," remembers Braves 24-year-old Chipper Jones. "Now, even in the dog days, we know we're going to be playing in front of a packed house."

Not only in Atlanta either. The Braves have led the majors in road attendance the last three years.

Says Braves pitcher Tom Glavine, "There aren't many places where you can go as a visiting team and there are as many fans cheering for you as there are for the home team."

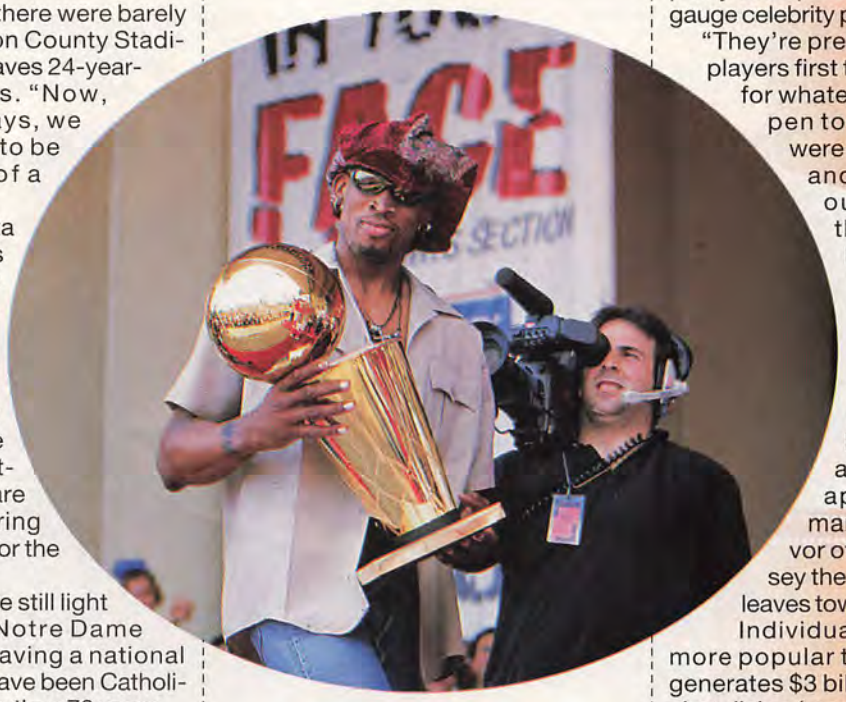
But the Braves are still light years away from Notre Dame when it comes to having a national following. The Irish have been Catholicism's Team for more than 70 years.

"Notre Dame is a very spiritual place, very family-oriented," says Rudy Ruettiger, whose 1993 autobiographical movie *Rudy*, about an undersized, overachieving Notre Dame walk-on football player, lives on via cable TV. "That attracts a lot of people. Sometimes people lose sight of what Notre Dame is about because of the NBC contract, because of all the money that's out there. Notre Dame is successful, but that's not only what attracts people."

Coming off 6-5-1 and 9-3 seasons, the Irish have lost a bit of their luster, but they'll never lose their core audience. Even in down years, Notre Dame's weekly TV ratings are solid, but it is in their championship runs that the Irish reign supreme. Take 1993, for example. NBC Sports execs will never forget the 16.0 rating the network garnered that year for a November Notre Dame vs. Florida State matchup.

To put that rating in perspective, Nebraska-Florida drew an 18.8 rating for the Fiesta Bowl national-championship game last New Year's. Prime-time audience, a holiday, national-championship game...and it just barely beat a highly anticipated regular-season Notre Dame game.

"A lot of that is due to the brilliant marketing of Notre Dame from decades ago," says Ruettiger. "Notre Dame gave us Knute Rockne, George Gipp, The Four Horsemen, family values, the underdog attitude. And America loved it. I tell ya, Hollywood would never have made my movie if I went to Michigan."



America loves a winner, so it's no surprise that the four-titles-in-the-'90s Bulls are all the rage.

In contrast, pro teams rely on individuals to sell their teams and develop followings. Stars of old used to taste the fruits of victory by maybe getting their own local radio show. Today, Rodman gets a TV deal, and not just from your local TV station—he's got his own national gig on MTV.

Stars of old used to make cameo appearances in movies; in last month's *Space Jam,* Jordan actually co-starred with Bugs Bunny. Stars of old used to appear in an occasional music video. Sanders not only has appeared in videos, he made his own rap CD.

"The way sports is headed, with a big emphasis on the business end of it, I don't know how much longer fans are going to follow teams," says Henry Schafer, executive vice president at Marketing Evaluations Inc., the company that produces Q ratings to gauge celebrity popularity.

"They're pretty much rooting for players first these days, and then for whatever teams they happen to play for. The Bulls were competitive the year and a half Jordan was out of the sport, but they certainly didn't have the high-profile following they have now."

As a result of the superstars jumping from team to team, fans themselves have become free agents. Today, a kid is apt to trash his Rodman Spurs jersey in favor of a Rodman Bulls jersey the minute the superstar leaves town.

Individuals in pro sports are more popular than ever. The NBA generates $3 billion annually in merchandising (read: replica jerseys). Divide that by 29 teams and you understand why the Bulls can afford to pay Jordan $25 million this year for his services.

Teams recognize the importance of hanging on to the personalities. It's no coincidence that the Cowboys, Bulls and Braves have retained the rights to Smith, Aikman, Sanders, Jordan, Scottie Pippen, Greg Maddux and David Justice for their entire careers. When the high-profile stars go, the team loses some of its following. The same holds true, though to a lesser extent, when one of America's Teams is hit by scandal.

Take the Michael Irvin case. Irvin was never one to shy away from a camera. But when criminal charges were levied against the Dallas wide receiver over the summer, those once-welcomed reporters became the Cowboys' worst nightmare.

Stories of strip clubs, orgies and drugs flooded Dallas papers. In the

BRIAN SPURLOCK

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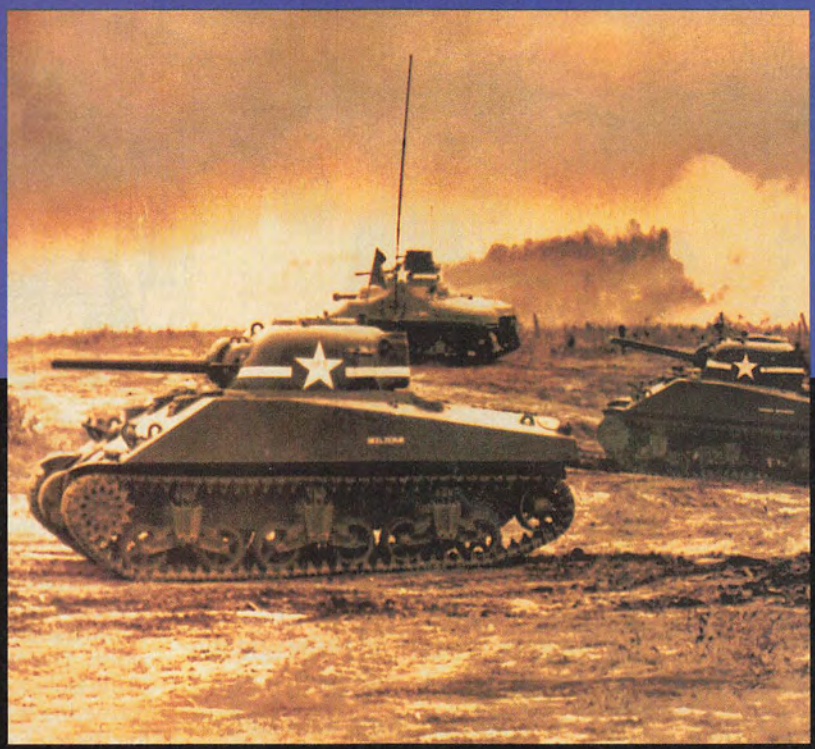

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"People know everyone on the Cowboys' offense, even our line. Man, Nate Newton is Hollywood!" — *Deion Sanders*

course of two years, two Cowboys were arrested for various criminal acts. Four were suspended by the league for violating the NFL's substance-abuse policy.

"Being America's Team brings a lot of baggage," says Smith, pointing to the out-of-town reporters now assembled in Dallas. "Look at all the unfamiliar faces around here now."

"I think a lot of people are very critical because of the whole America's Team reputation that we're supposed to live up to," says Kevin Williams, Irvin's wide-receiver teammate. "Just because a couple people make mistakes, even if they're superstars, don't forget we're still human beings. America's not perfect and neither are the Cowboys."

But some teams, like the Braves, are at least striving for perfection.

"I think that's one thing that makes this team appealing as opposed to the Cowboys," says Glavine. "We're not a crazy team, we're not a team of troublemakers or egos. When it comes to that kind of stuff, I guess we're kind of a boring team. If you want a team of big mouths, you're going to have to watch someone else."

"That America's Team thing was in the closet when I first joined the Cowboys in '88," says San Francisco 49ers linebacker Ken Norton Jr., who still lives in Dallas in the off-season. "We brought that image back to where it should be. What's disappointing to me now is that all the hard work all of us put together to get the Cowboys back has been wasted."

Or maybe not. It'll take more than a few arrests to turn the country off from the Cowboys. Another 1-15 season? That may do it, but despite several off-field incidents last season, Dallas' TV ratings ranked head and shoulders above the rest of the league. Four of the five highest-rated Fox TV games from the 1995 regular season featured the Cowboys (the exception: a Thanksgiving contest pitting the Lions against the Vikings). Don't expect a decline this season, especially with this month's game with Jimmy Johnson's Miami Dolphins and next month's annual Dallas-San Francisco ratings blockbuster on the docket.

All eyes are on Lou Holtz and the Fighting Irish, thanks to a one-of-a-kind contract with NBC.

JON SOOHOO

So are the Cowboys the most popular of America's Teams? Based on TV ratings, merchandising profits and Q ratings, the answer is yes, followed by the Bulls, the Irish and the Braves, with all four well above their peers.

"If you had to compare the Bulls and Cowboys, you'd have to go with the Cowboys because they've been more popular longer," says Pippen.

"Worldwide, though, it might be different. Basketball is one of the top international sports. You go to a different country or different parts of Europe, the NFL is just not as popular as the NBA."

So would it be safe to say the Boys are America's Team, while the Bulls are the World's Team?

"I wouldn't say that. I'd go with the Dream Team before the Bulls," says Pippen, a 1992 and 1996 veteran of Olympic competition. "A lot of superstars on the Dream Team have fans in cities all over the world. The magnitude of being a part of the Bulls is great, but worldwide, by no means is there any comparison to the Dream Team.

"But when it comes to America's Teams—us, the Cowboys, Braves, Notre Dame—we all qualify for the title." ★

YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW

Once upon a time, Mickey Mantle's New York Yankees, Vince Lombardi's Green Bay Packers and Bill Russell's Boston Celtics would have been labeled America's Teams, had the phrase existed back then.

"All this stuff is cyclical," says Fox's Vince Wladika. "The thing you have to remember: The reason the Cowboys, Bulls and Braves are where they are is because they're winning. When the Cowboys were losing in the late '80s, they weren't as big a draw. When the Bulls were losing, pre-Michael Jordan, no one really cared. When the Braves were on TBS losing every day, no one wanted to watch them. Their ratings weren't that good. When a team doesn't win, there's always a new team to replace them."

Our picks for Tomorrow's Teams: the Shaquille O'Neal-led Lakers in basketball, the Brett Favre-led Packers in football and the Albert Belle-led Indians in baseball. And with Wayne Gretzky teamed with former Edmonton Oilers mate Mark Messier in a big market like New York, the Rangers' duo could become the first pair to have been part of both a Canada's Team and an America's Team in the same lifetime.

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EXPERTS ARE STILL WAITING FOR NOTRE DAME QUARTERBACK RON POWLUS TO FULFILL HIS POTENTIAL AS THE...

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The history of Notre Dame football is a mix of hyperbole and cliché. The South Bend campus reflects this: In the shadows of the Golden Dome and Touchdown Jesus lies a sleepy, tree-lined village inhabited by thousands of your typical all-American kids.

Among them is a young man capable of fulfilling the greatest of Notre Dame hyperbole while blending quietly into the South Bend backdrop. And all the while, Ron Powlus is dropping clichés like they're going out of style.

"I want to play my best for the team and for no other reason," says

BY CRAIG ELLENPORT

TOM DiPACE

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SPORTS SPECIALTIES

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Powlus, the 22-year-old quarterback who came to Notre Dame in 1993 with about the best credentials a high school quarterback could have. Powlus was a strong-armed kid from western Pennsylvania—a breeding ground for guys named Unitas, Namath, Montana and Kelly—and he was following in the footsteps of Rick Mirer, the Notre Dame quarterback who had just been drafted in the first round by the Seattle Seahawks.

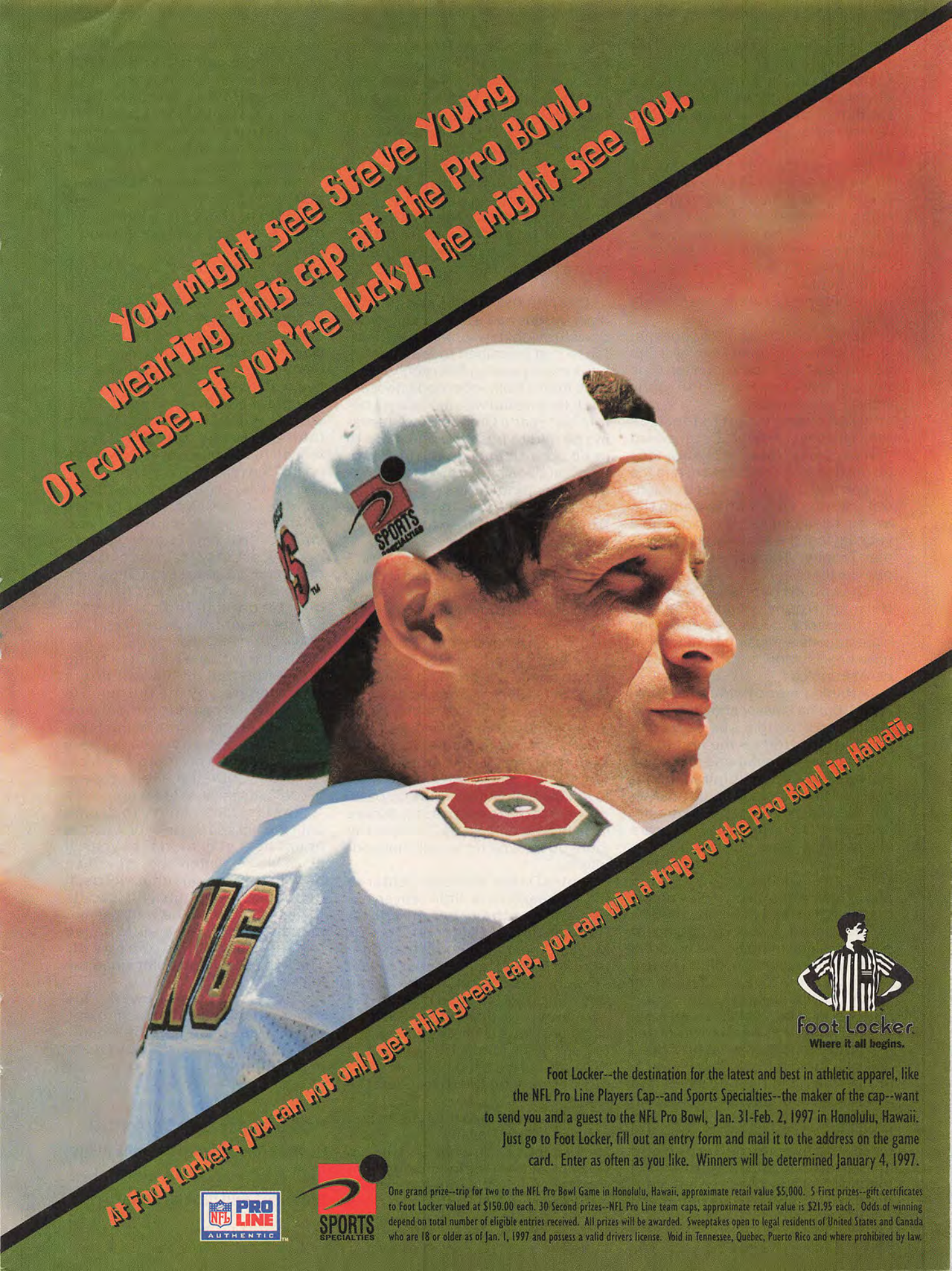
Hyperbole? Beano Cook, the king of college football hyperbole, predicted no less than two Heisman trophies for Powlus before his Notre Dame career was over. Now in his senior campaign for the Fighting Irish, Ron Powlus has yet to complete two full seasons.

"I'm happy the way things turned out," says Powlus, who's not about to let you see him sweat. And he won't let you hear him complain either. Powlus would have started for Notre Dame as a true freshman were it not for a broken right clavicle suffered in the final preseason scrimmage. Head coach Lou Holtz was prepared to throw Powlus into the biggest game of the year later that season—Notre Dame's showdown with undefeated, top-ranked Florida State—but the kid reinjured the bone during practice.

His freshman year perhaps set the tone for a collegiate career of broken promises and broken bones. Along the way, however, Powlus has managed to break several Notre Dame passing records. He tied a single-game school record in his Notre Dame debut in 1994 with four touchdown

Notre Dame planned on opening up the offense in what figures to be Powlus' final season in South Bend.

BRUCE L. SCHWARTZMAN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passes against Northwestern. He finished the season with a school-record 19 touchdowns through the air. But the positive numbers were tarnished by Notre Dame's 6-5-1 record, the team's worst finish since 1986.

He came back in 1995 and led Notre Dame to a 7-2 record before breaking his left arm against Navy. Notre Dame was on its way to a top-five finish in the polls, but with a young defense and inexperienced quarterback Tom Krug having grabbed the reins, the Irish couldn't upend Florida State in the Orange Bowl.

Now Powlus is back for one last shot. (He has the option to play a fifth year in 1997, but don't count on it.) Is there at least one Heisman Trophy within Powlus' reach?

"I really don't want to focus on that," he says. "I think it's an award that people fall into. You know, they go out and play their season, and the person that played the best throughout the year winds up winning the award. I don't think you can go into a year saying, 'I want to win the Heisman Trophy.' Things just don't happen like that."

They could happen like that. A Heisman Trophy would be the perfect tonic for a career's worth of lofty expectations and painful injuries that have been symbolic of the team's recent struggles.

"I think anybody would be frustrated, but he's never shown it," says Holtz, as strong a supporter as Powlus has. Holtz is the first to tell you that the expectations placed on Powlus have been unfair, and that not even Joe Montana could have altered the destiny of the 1994 squad.

"Expectations for Notre Dame are always high," says the coach who is beginning his 11th season in South Bend. "But we had a down period there for one year, and it was unfortunate that he had to come in and be the quarterback of it. He had never played college football, and he didn't have much protection, didn't have a strong running game. The team wasn't particularly outstanding on defense. And he just happened to be the individual that was thrown into all that. But just look at what he's done when he's had the ball in his hands."

Powlus calls the middle of last season the high point of his career thus far. After Notre Dame muddled through a 2-3 September, with losses to Northwestern, Purdue and Ohio State, Powlus then threw six touchdowns and just three interceptions in five straight wins before the injury against Navy. Powlus adds, however: "I think the high point is yet to come. This year, I think, is the year that myself and Notre Dame as a team put ourselves back on top."

Throughout Notre Dame's spring practice, Powlus, with a 15-inch pin still in his arm, watched from the sidelines. Powlus is a marketing major, but he might as well be a premed student. At least when it comes to the arm bones, he's probably learned enough medical jargon to play a role on "Chicago Hope" or "ER."

Despite the lack of scrimmage time, Powlus had a busy spring practice studying new wrinkles in an offense that promised to feature perhaps more passing than you've ever seen from a Holtz-coached offense.

Holtz tinkered with the offense before last year's Orange Bowl, realizing he had to pass the ball more to keep up with Florida State. Krug, who has since had to give up football due to a spinal injury, led Holtz's "Blarney Offense" in the Orange Bowl, throwing three touchdown passes.

"They came up with stuff I hadn't seen," Seminoles head coach Bobby Bowden said after the game. "I didn't even think Lou could think of all that stuff."

It's not exactly the run-and-shoot, but it's an opportunity for Powlus to put up some eye-popping numbers for a Notre Dame quarterback.

"No question, it's definitely going to benefit this team," says Powlus. "We're not changing the whole philosophy of Notre Dame football here. We're still a physical team, we want to run the ball. But when we do pass, we want to make our passing game a little more complicated and a little more open, which can only help our offense."

Notre Dame, however, entered the '96 season with little proven experience at the receiver spots. Record-setting receiver Derrick Mayes, who caught more than one-third of Notre Dame's passes last season, was drafted by the Green Bay Packers. Holtz had been toying with moving sophomore Jarious Jackson, Notre Dame's option quarterback of the future, to receiver. But that was before Krug, the only other quarterback on the roster, left the team.

"I'd like to utilize the talents and abilities of Ron Powlus," says Holtz, "but it depends on what kind of help we can get from the incoming freshmen receivers. We told them when we were recruiting them that we really needed help at wide receiver. Now they're going to find out that was not recruiting conversation."

Talk to Powlus enough about the new passing attack and he finally comes around. For a moment, he forgets about the clichés and smells blood.

"In the past, we've had teams that could beat anybody," he says. "And I think this year, with the new offense, we have a chance to really blow some teams out."

If they don't, Powlus will be the first to hear about it, as usual. And as usual, he is prepared for that.

"It's something that you have to deal with when you come to Notre Dame," he says. "You're going to be overly critiqued, whether positive or negative. That could be a little unfair, and that's tough to deal with at times. It's Notre Dame's fault that we as football players feel so much pressure. But that's part of the reason I came here."

For all of the physical tools Powlus possesses, Holtz prefers talking about his leadership and smarts. "He's not been blessed with necessarily the best of luck," the coach admits. "But I think he's a fine quarterback. I can't think of a quarterback in the country I'd rather have this year than Ron Powlus."

The kid with the weight of Notre Dame football on his shoulders isn't hindered by the burden. He walks around campus without incident. When he's not playing football or doing schoolwork, he's playing cards in his room. Pro football? Of course I'd like to play in the NFL, he says. Whatever.

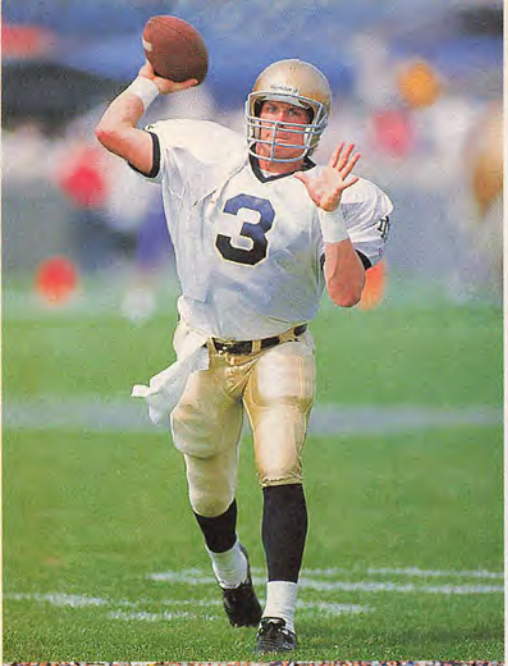
Powlus doesn't have to decide until the '96 season is over whether or not he'll stay for a fifth year. If it's in his best interest to stay, then he will, he says. In other words, it depends on what the NFL scouts think of him. When he was a senior in high school, the scouts called him a can't-miss prospect. They've been fairly quiet since the injuries.

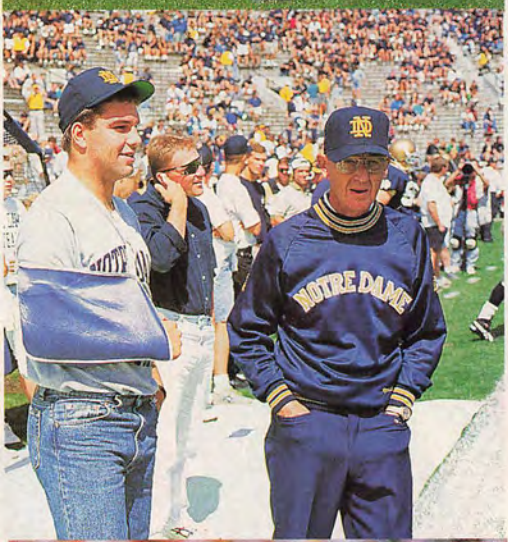
"Hopefully," says Powlus, "the scouts that said those nice things when I was coming to Notre Dame will feel the same way when I'm leaving." ★

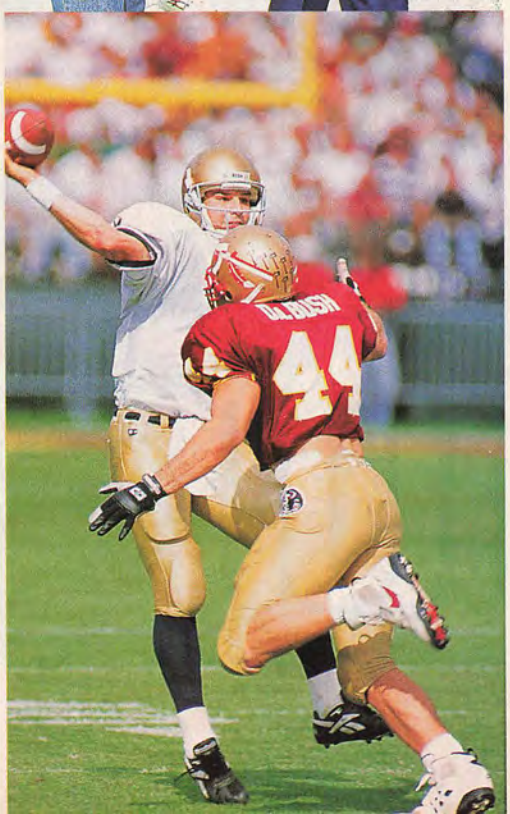
BOB ROSATO

(2) BRIAN SPURLOCK

Unlike predecessor Mirer (top), Powlus has not had the luck of the Irish in a career filled with broken promises and broken bones.







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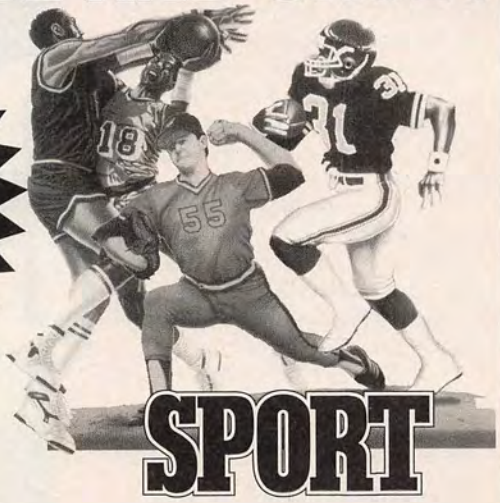

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HOTSHOT

Kerry Collins

While most rookie quarterbacks sit on the sidelines for at least a full season, the Carolina Panthers threw Kerry Collins into the starting lineup after the third week of the 1995 campaign.

"Quite honestly, I thought it would be more toward the middle of the season, maybe even toward the last third of the season," says the 23-year-old Collins, who helped Carolina finish 7-9 last season, the best record for a first-year team in NFL history. "But it just so happened that I had been progressing with the offense, and the two other quarterbacks [Frank Reich and Jack Trudeau] were struggling a little bit, so the coaches decided the time was right."

Collins admits to having had a tough time of it in the early going. He threw four interceptions in a game twice en route to finishing with the second-lowest passer rating among starting quarterbacks. But the turning point came in the next-to-last game of the season.

The Panthers trailed the Atlanta Falcons, 17-14, and Collins wasn't getting very far with a short, controlled passing game. When another quick slant was called in from the sidelines, Collins took matters into his own hands: He called an audible.

"The Falcons were looking for the quick slant," Collins recalls. "So when the play came into the huddle, I looked at Willie Green, who is really my favorite target on the play, and told him to run a slant-and-go."

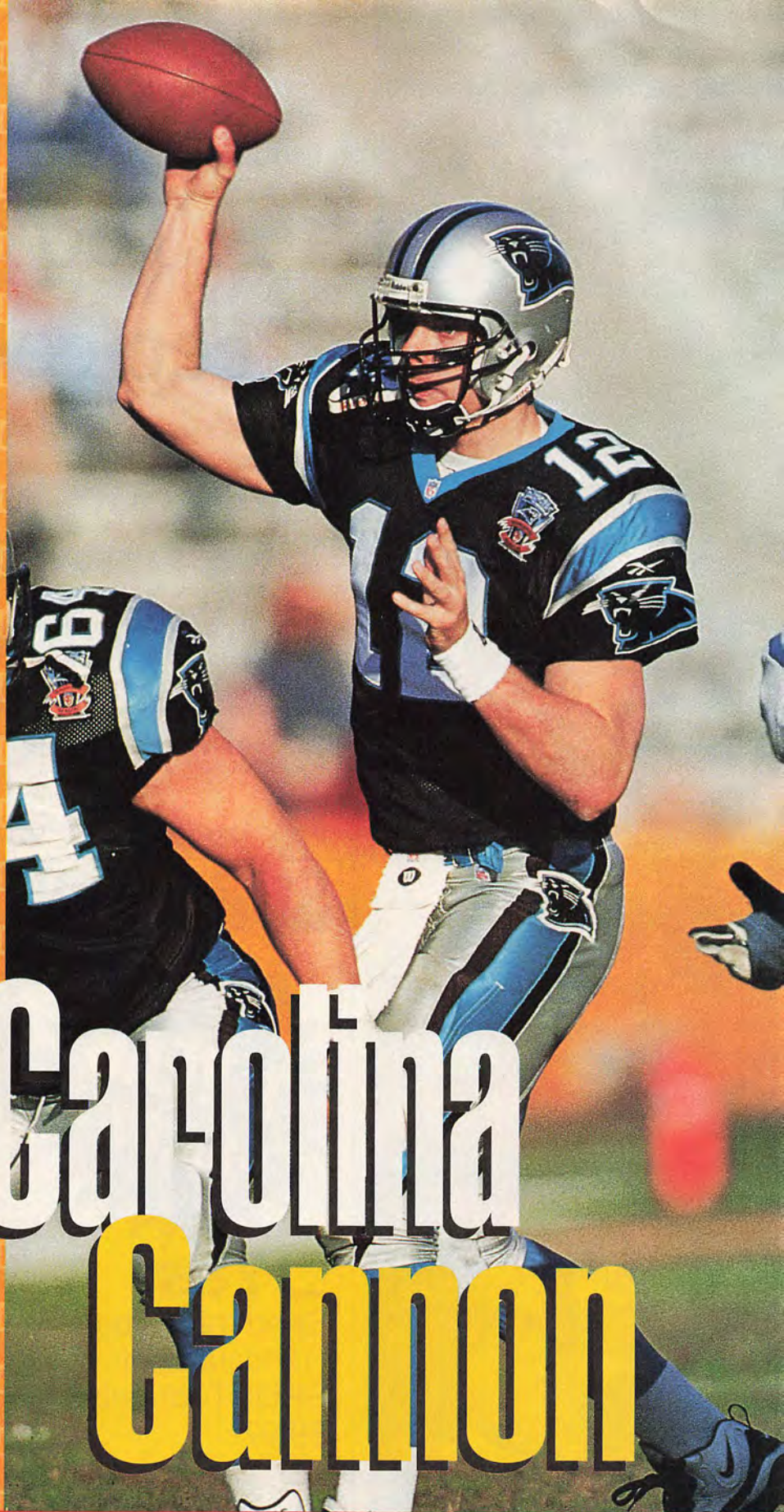
Collins hit Green for an 89-yard, game-winning touchdown.

"It was a definite turning point," Collins says. "It was something that showed I was progressing."

Now he's ready to progress even further and take a place among the NFL's brightest young stars. The Panthers can't wait.

—Craig Ellenport

RON VESELY



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HOTSHOT

Troy Davis

Iowa State and its free-falling football program, after a disastrous 0-10-1 1994 season in which its quarterback led the rushing attack with a paltry 375 yards, was searching for an offensive jolt.

One game into 1995, the hunt was over. Twenty-one-year-old tailback Troy Davis, who netted only 187 yards as a freshman, exploded for a Cyclones-record 291 yards and three touchdowns in a win over Ohio. Entering Big-8 conference play three games later, the 5-8, 185-pound Davis was averaging 228 yards rushing, earning Heisman Trophy mention and rare national exposure for Iowa State.

Davis says he expected the monumental yardage once new head coach Dan McCarney promised him the bulk of the rushing load for the '95 season.

"Coach McCarney told me I was going to be 'the man,' " says Davis. "Everything worked out the way I thought it would."

The rugged-running, hole-hitting Davis certainly couldn't have foreseen the sort of game he would have against UNLV in late September of last season, when he rushed for 302 yards and five touchdowns before being taken out with 5:19 left in the third quarter. Davis proceeded to scorch Colorado for 203 yards, burn Oklahoma State for 202, and hang 183 on Kansas State, which prior to the game had owned the nation's leading rush defense. In all, Davis amassed a nation-best 2,466 all-purpose yards, 2,010 on the ground, both NCAA Division I-A sophomore records.

Davis came to Ames from Southridge High in Miami, where he became the first area high schooler to rush for more than 2,000 yards in a season (sound familiar?). Early test scores discouraged the Florida universities, and when Davis was primed to take his measureless skills to the next level, Iowa State was first in line.

The relationship has paid dividends for both player and school, and it won't end after Davis leaves Ames. Younger brother Darren, who two seasons ago became the second Miami prep to rush for 2,000 yards, is an Iowa State freshman this fall. —*Paul M. Johnson*

PAUL JASIENSKI

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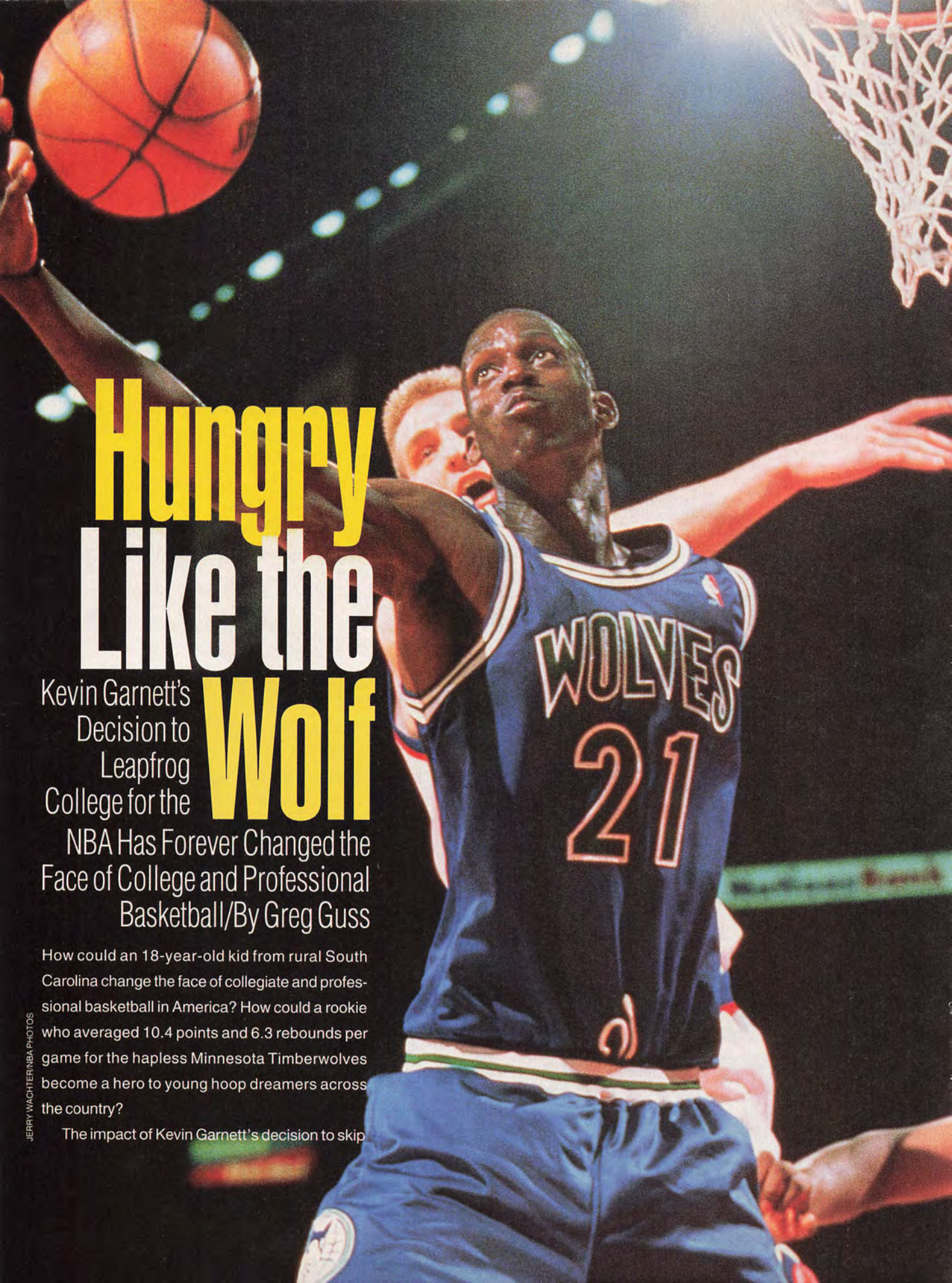

Hungry Like the Wolf

Kevin Garnett's Decision to Leapfrog College for the NBA Has Forever Changed the Face of College and Professional Basketball/By Greg Guss

How could an 18-year-old kid from rural South Carolina change the face of collegiate and professional basketball in America? How could a rookie who averaged 10.4 points and 6.3 rebounds per game for the hapless Minnesota Timberwolves become a hero to young hoop dreamers across the country?

The impact of Kevin Garnett's decision to skip

JERRY WACHTER/NBA PHOTOS

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I'm not really trying to impress you with my wealth. All I'm trying to do here is to prove to you that if it wasn't because of that money secret I was lucky enough to find that day, I still would have been poor or maybe even bankrupt. It was only through this amazing money secret that I could pull myself out of debt and become wealthy. Who knows what would have happened to my family and me.

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Why, you may ask, am I willing to share this secret with you? To make money? Hardly. First, I already have all the money and possessions I'll ever need. Second, my secret does not involve any sort of competition whatsoever. Third, nothing is more satisfying to me than sharing my secret only with those who realize a golden opportunity and get on it quickly.

This secret is incredibly simple. Anyone can use it. You can get started with practically no money at all and the risk is almost zero. You don't need special training or even a high school education. It doesn't matter how young or old you are and it will work for you at home or even while you are on vacation.

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This is a very safe way to get extra cash. It is practically risk free. It is not a dangerous gamble. Everything you do has already been tested and you can get started for less money than most people spend for a night on the town.

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News Tribune:
Wright's material is a MUST for anyone who contemplates making it as an independent entrepreneur.

Success:
John Wright believes in success, pure and simple.

Money Making Opportunities:
John Wright has a rare gift for helping people with no experience make lots of money. He's made many people wealthy.

California Political Week:
...The politics of high finance made easy.

The Tolucan:
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Hollywood Citizen News:
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"As Mr. John Wright's accountant, I certify that his assets exceed one million dollars." Mark Davis

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college for the NBA is still reverberating throughout the basketball world some 16 months after he entered the 1995 NBA draft. Garnett cannot claim sole responsibility for the fact that 42 underclassmen, including three preps, declared themselves eligible for the '96 draft, nor is he the only reason TV ratings for the NCAA Final Four are significantly down. But Garnett has become the icon for these and other trends that are drastically altering America's basketball landscape.

THE KID So you want to be the next Kevin Garnett? Does the fact that Garnett didn't want to be the first Kevin Garnett mean anything to the kids on the playgrounds across the country? Judging from the ever-increasing number of high schoolers and college underclassmen dumping the books and jumping for the big bucks, the answer is a resounding no.

Garnett's decision to skip college for the NBA was made out of necessity rather than free will. After transferring from Mauldin, S.C., to Farragut Academy in Chicago for his senior year, Garnett posted All-America numbers in the classroom (a 3.8 GPA in 13 core classes) but twice failed to register a passing mark on the nationally standardized ACT exam.

"Man, I wanted to go to college," says Garnett. "I went to class. I took the ACT classes. I wanted to have options."

Garnett's options were ultimately pared to two: Enter the NBA draft or go Prop 48 and sit out a year before being able to play college ball. After averaging 26 points, 18 rebounds, seven assists and six blocked shots per game and being named Illinois' "Mr. Basketball" after his senior season, Garnett focused on the McDonald's All-America high school basketball game as the arena in which to vault himself into the NBA's lottery. And after posting 18 points and 11 rebounds and earning MVP honors, Garnett had suddenly become a prodigy who could not be passed up. Within months, after the T-Wolves selected him with the fifth overall pick in the draft, Garnett had become a teen-age millionaire.

"Until last year, nobody gave a crap about me, and now everybody wants to be like me," Garnett says. "But I understand the position I'm in. I know I'm in the public eye, so I use my head in everything that I do."

On the court, Garnett adapted well to the NBA game, moving into the Timberwolves' starting lineup by midseason. Garnett averaged more than 36 minutes while starting Minnesota's final 42 games, registering 14.0 points and 8.4 rebounds per game during that stretch.

Off the court, Garnett's mood seemed to fluctuate from friendly and candid to precocious and surly depending on how well he played. And by the end of the season, Garnett had clearly begun to fulfill the potential on which he was drafted. Timberwolves head coach Flip Saunders believes Garnett has already graduated from "the future" of the franchise to "the present."

"At 19, he's the one guy on this team with the attitude," says Saunders. "He's a leader. He earned that starting role. He's worked tremendously hard all year."

Garnett seems aware of the impact of his decision. "I know people were watching me. I know people wanted me to fail," he says. "But you've got to want to get better, and that's what really keeps me going. I want to get better every game I play. I want to show the world. I want to beat the odds."

"The thing I hate to see the most is young guys coming out and making a lot of money," Kemp says. "When I came out, I signed for a long time and I played my contract out before I asked for any money. And I did that for the simple fact that I've seen a lot of guys come out early, make a lot of money, and they're satisfied. They don't work on their game.

"You're always at a disadvantage coming out hardship. The hardest transition in professional sports is off the court, and there's no way an 18-year-old is going to be as mentally prepared as a 21-year-old. All the guys can play the game, but the attitude is what makes the difference."

"I don't think it's just the money," Kemp continues. "It's the opportunity. People are telling them how good they are. People want to be stars. And the way the world is now, everybody wants to be good. Before I made my decision, I went to coaches and guys who had played and asked for advice, and they said as long as you give that type of effort you'll be fine, but the minute you stop working on your game you'll be average."

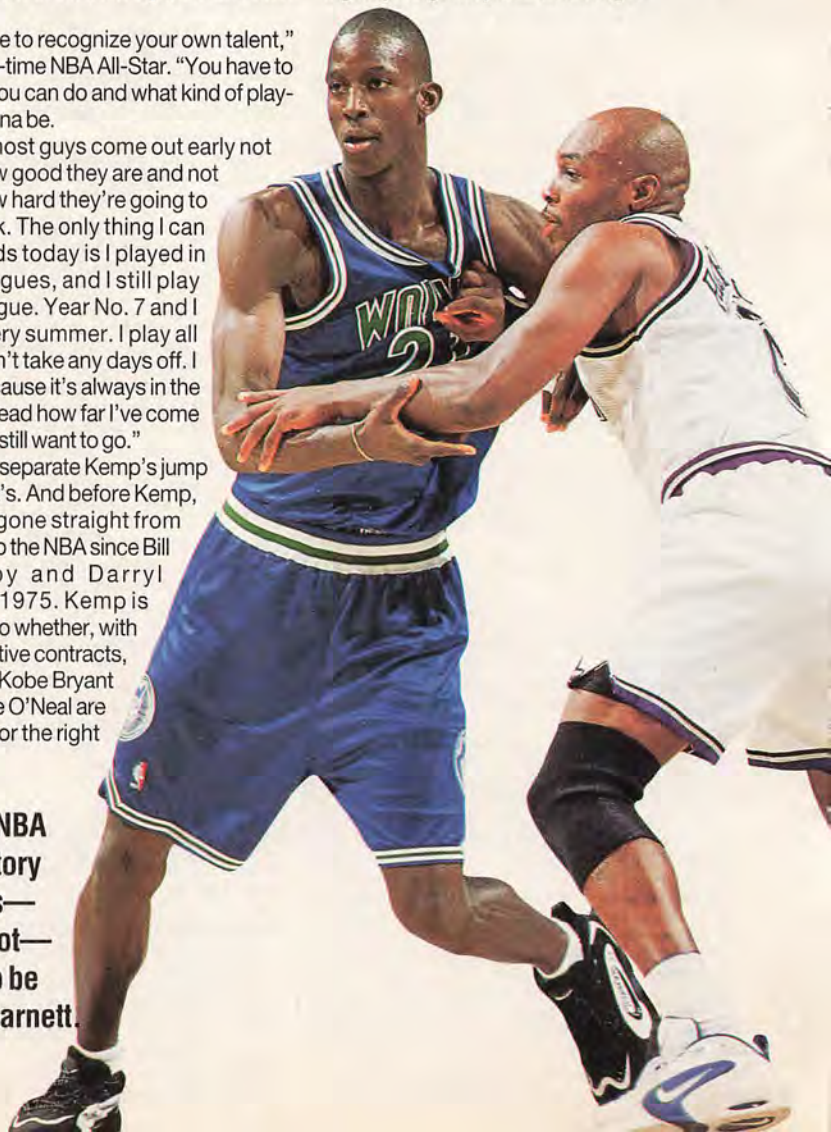
"Until last year, nobody gave a crap about me. Now everybody

THE MAN-CHILD One does not normally associate wisdom with a 26-year-old man whose education consists of a high school diploma and a couple of junior college classes. But in the case of Seattle SuperSonics All-Star forward Shawn Kemp, seven seasons of NBA experience has engendered the Reign Man with a formula for teen-agers to succeed in the NBA.

"You have to recognize your own talent," says the four-time NBA All-Star. "You have to know what you can do and what kind of player you're gonna be.

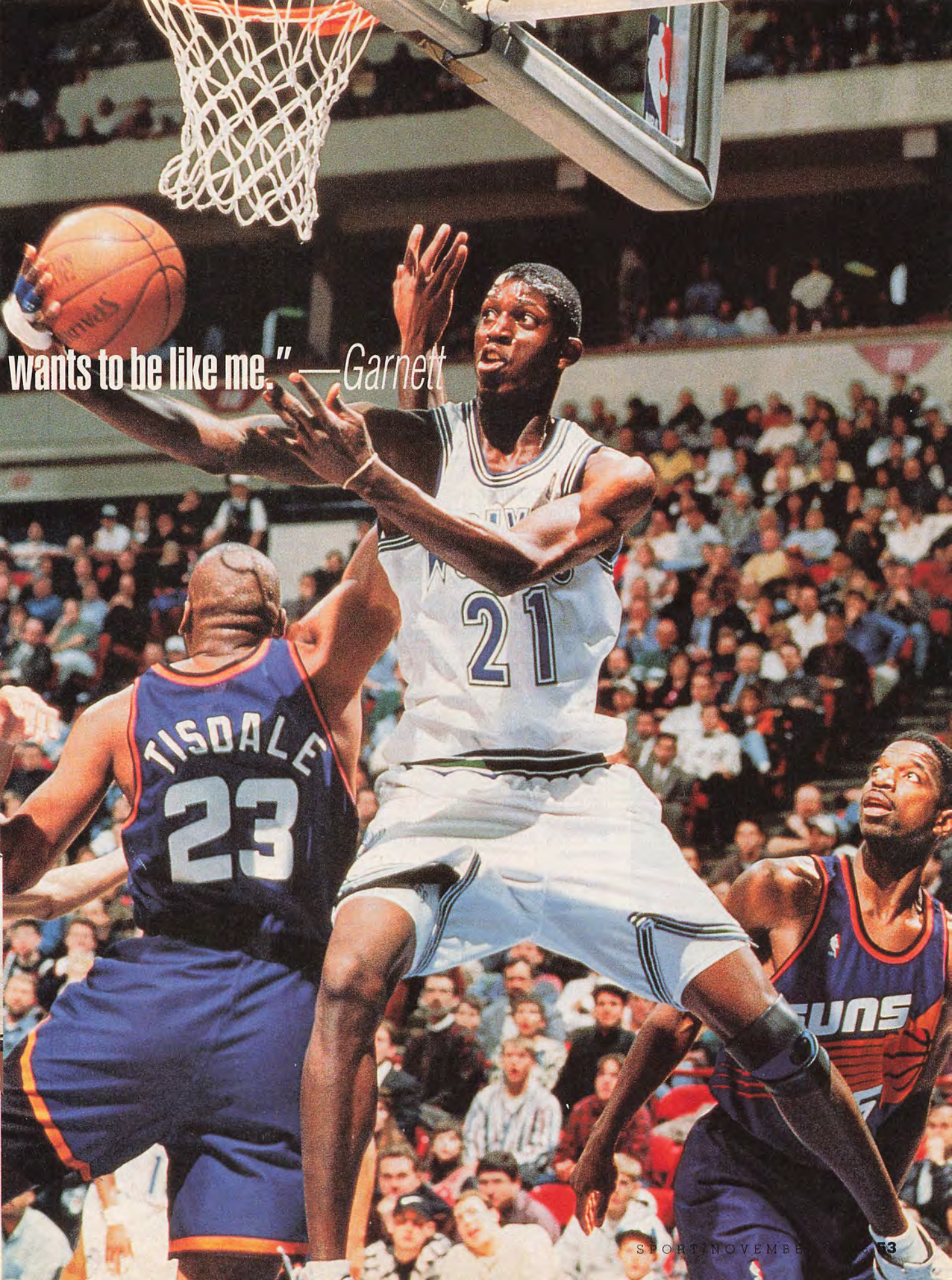
"I think most guys come out early not knowing how good they are and not knowing how hard they're going to have to work. The only thing I can tell these kids today is I played in summer leagues, and I still play summer league. Year No. 7 and I still play every summer. I play all summer, don't take any days off. I refuse to because it's always in the back of my head how far I've come and how far I still want to go."

Six years separate Kemp's jump from Garnett's. And before Kemp, no one had gone straight from high school to the NBA since Bill Willoughby and Darryl Dawkins in 1975. Kemp is skeptical as to whether, with today's lucrative contracts, kids such as Kobe Bryant and Jermaine O'Neal are coming out for the right reasons.



Garnett's NBA success story has others—ready or not—wanting to be the Next Garnett.

ROCKY WIDNER


wants to be like me." —Garnett
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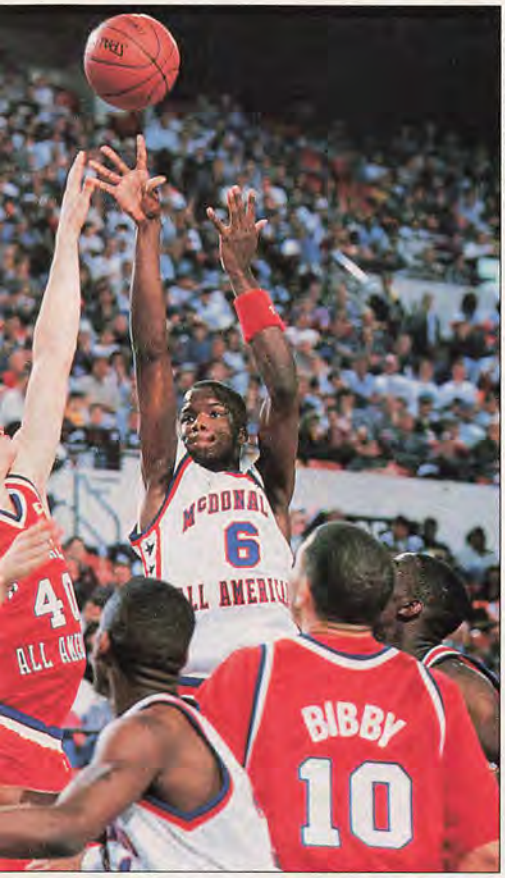

DOUG PENSINGER/ALLSPORT

We do it all for you: The McDonald's high school game provided Bryant (top) and O'Neal (bottom) the platform to strut their NBA stuff.

KOBE BRYANT "He just beat me to the punch," says Kobe Bryant of Garnett. "He made the jump before I did, but to tell you the truth, I'd been thinking about it since the ninth grade. Bryant, who last year suited up for Lower Merion High in Pennsylvania and will play alongside Shaquille O'Neal for the L.A. Lakers this year, will become the youngest player ever to see NBA regular-season action when the Lakers play Phoenix on Nov. 1.

Bryant's situation is unique in two very important ways. First, unlike Garnett and Jermaine O'Neal, Kobe had the grades and test scores to attend any college in the country. The son of former NBA forward Joe "Jellybean" Bryant, Kobe spent eight years with his dad overseas while the senior Bryant finished out his career. Kobe learned to speak Italian and gained valuable insight into the world of professional basketball.

Hardly a case of hardship, Bryant says he is pursuing a dream, not money. "I'm playing against great players, playing against the best in the world," Bryant says. "The competition. That's what I've always wanted."

JERMAINE O'NEAL High school star from South Carolina can't get high-enough test score so he turns pro. Sound familiar? Jermaine O'Neal, who played high school ball in Columbia, S.C., just 90 minutes south of Garnett's Mauldin, is following almost exactly in Garnett's footsteps.

"The fact that Garnett turned pro gave me another option that I may not have felt I had," says O'Neal. "I played against Kevin many times and felt I did pretty good, so I thought I could do what he did."

O'Neal foresees more preps jumping straight to the pros but, ironically, wishes to discourage the trend he has helped create. "There might be a lot more high school players coming out next year," says O'Neal. "And I don't think that's a real good decision. It's real tough mentally and physically for a 17- or 18-year-old, and I wouldn't recommend this to nobody. But I'm going to try to make the best of it."

THE VICTIM Of the three high school players who declared themselves eligible for the '96 draft, two—Bryant and O'Neal—were selected among the first 17 picks. The third, Taj "Red" McDavid, was not drafted. In fact, according to his high school coach, Bobby Tripp, McDavid isn't even a Division I college prospect, much less an NBA-caliber player. "I never would have advised him to [enter the draft]. He can score, but he really needs to bulk up and work on his defense to even play at the college level," Tripp says.

Like Garnett, the 6-5, 180-pound McDavid lacked the necessary test scores to earn a Division I scholarship. Unlike Garnett, McDavid wasn't recruited by Division I schools and is now resigned to honing his skills at the junior college level.

"I watched Kevin Garnett all year," says McDavid, who averaged 26 points and 13 rebounds for Palmetto High in Williamston, S.C. "I was thinking about playing in the NBA my whole senior year. I thought I had a pretty good shot."

The dream, according to McDavid, was supported by his family. "They told me to go for it," McDavid says. The delusion, as it turns out, didn't really cost McDavid. He never hired an agent and thus retains his college eligibility. But what is frightening is that he truly believed he was ready for the NBA.

"Doesn't it amaze you?" asks Bill Branch, director of scouting for the Charlotte Hornets. "This is a kid who considered himself physically and mentally ready to play in the NBA. It's sad."

McDavid says he is considering Spartanburg Methodist College in South Carolina as well as a junior college in Florida, though a week prior to making his decision, he had forgotten the school's name.

EMPTY SHELVES This year's Kentucky-Syracuse NCAA title game registered an 18.3 rating, the lowest for a championship game since the 1972 UCLA-Florida State matchup, which was not played in prime time.

CBS Sports president David Kenin discounted the significance of the tournament's waning drawing power. "There are so many factors affecting ratings. I don't think we should be focused on them," Kenin says.

So if we shouldn't focus on the ratings, then let's focus on the factors.

What, if any, were the compelling reasons to watch last spring's title game? If you weren't a fan of Kentucky or Syracuse, why watch? There were no superstars, no rivalries. The days of Lew Alcindor vs. Elvin Hayes and Patrick Ewing vs. Ralph Sampson have long since passed. The college superstar has become an anachronism, with underclassmen deserting their teams as soon as their personal stock reaches lottery potential.

The Final Four will always be a good, dramatic show, but it may never be able to recapture the special flair that only experienced players and teams can provide.

THE FUTURE In 1975, Willoughby went straight from high school to the NBA, having argued that he was under financial hardship and that the league should not be able to prevent him from earning a professional living if he could make a team.

Hardship has become the catchphrase to describe kids who leave college (or high school) early for the NBA, but at this point, it has become a misnomer. The true hardship has fallen upon NBA front offices who are now forced to take chances on young, likely immature and underdeveloped young men whose "potential" may come to fruition at the same time their contracts expire and they become free agents.

"It's a game we all have to be willing to play," Branch says resignedly. "What if that kid you passed up turns out to be the next Michael Jordan?" ★

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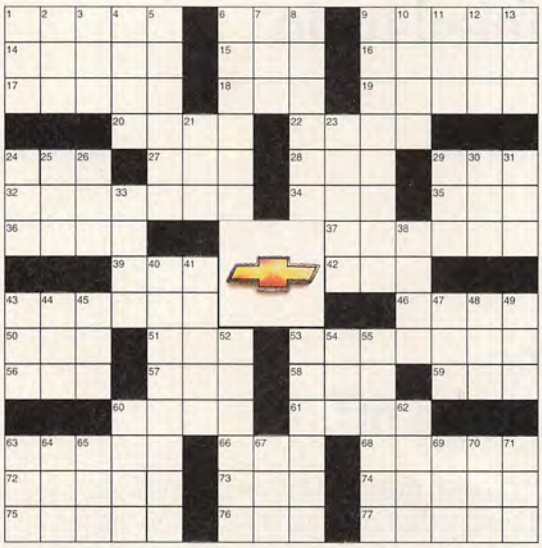
The Chevrolet Truck SPORTword Puzzle

By Stanley Newman



Across

1. Racetrack shapes
6. America's Cup race setting, at times
9. "Mary Tyler Moore Show" spinoff
14. World champ on ice in '82
15. __ Heels (ACC team)
16. 3,000 Hit Club member
17. Indy 500 winner in '83
18. Roberto De Vincenzo's homeland: abbr.
19. PGA event
20. __ end (over): 2 wds.
22. The Miners' school: abbr.
24. Once around the track
27. And so on: abbr.
28. Make a wild throw, maybe
29. Pinch runner, for one
32. MVP or Heisman recipient
34. NFL season month: abbr.
35. Alcott of the LPGA
36. Bowling Hall of Famer Billy
37. 9 Down victor in '95
39. Gooden nickname
42. Fitness center
43. Former Ice Capades owner
46. Work the mound
50. Canoe propeller
51. Vowel sequence
53. Kids' vehicles
56. Propel a shot
57. Golfer Stephenson
58. Before, to poets
59. School at Tempe: abbr.
60. Athlete's courage
61. Manager's position, so to speak
63. Yankee nickname
66. Like imperfect clothing: abbr.
68. Golf and bowling circuits
72. Big Sky Conference school
73. "__ make myself clear?": 2 wds.
74. Nugget from Kentucky
75. Where Jim Bunning can be seen these days
76. __ position (skier's crouch)
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Down

1. Liquid measures: abbr.
2. Lead vehicle in a marathon
3. Thumbs-up vote
4. Molten rock
5. Emulated 14 Across
6. Golfer's or batter's concern
7. Portion of corn
8. Disputed a call
9. International golf prize: 2 wds.
10. Gervin's field goal
11. Little Rascals, a.k.a. "__ Gang"
12. High-tech fingerprint
13. Part of ACC: abbr.
21. Had breakfast
23. Golf hazards
24. Cy Young winner in '60
25. Reaction to a hole-in-one
26. After-school sports group: abbr.
29. __ Paulo, Brazil
30. Balk caller
31. Tournament offering
33. Teammate of Bando and Blue
38. Pro __ (proportionally)
40. NBA rebound leader in 1988-89
41. Traction aid
43. Infield bounce
44. Nonpro sports organization: abbr.
45. "Rocky III" bad guy: 2 wds.
47. "Are you a man __ mouse?": 2 wds.
48. "__ Anybody's Ballgame" (Garagiola book)
49. NCAA women's indoor track champ in '95
52. Area near the basket
53. Career grand-slam record holder
54. The Ducks: abbr.
55. Havlicek was one
60. '60s Indians manager Mel Mc__
62. Engage in rock-concert revelry
63. Word to an attack dog
64. Favre stat
65. Ice Cube music
67. Maris, for short
69. Put to work
70. Gun the engine
71. Stallone's nickname

See page 61 for Chevrolet Truck SPORTword Puzzle answers.

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QB or not to be?

That Is the Question Facing the Young Guns Trying to Succeed at the NFL's Most Demanding Position/By Michael Bradley

BY THE TIME HEATH SHULER FINALLY reported to the Washington Redskins' training camp in 1994, he was wealthier but hardly wiser. By missing the first weeks of practice to fatten his contract, Shuler, in football parlance, had just thrown himself for a loss.

Instead of learning the Washington offense from the beginning, Shuler arrived in camp way behind. And they didn't exactly stop everything to let the new guy catch up—no matter how much he was being paid. It was

SPORTSCHROME

as if he had shown up for his first day of accounting class wondering about the difference between a debit and credit, only to find the other students completing annual reports. As he competes for the starting job with Gus Frerotte, a seventh-round pick in '94, Shuler can't help but think what a better start might've meant to him.

"Missing just two weeks of camp put me a year behind," he says. "I missed all the small details and secrets of the offense. I had to wait until the season was over to learn everything I missed."

The NFL is harsh, but it's perhaps cruelest to young quarterbacks. Rookies thrive at nearly every other position but rarely have smashing debuts under center. The position is the toughest in football and could be the most demanding in all of sports. A rookie running back may be simply faster than everybody else. A wide receiver could be smoother. But successful quarterbacks must master and demonstrate such a variety of skills and make so many crucial decisions every game that their learning curves are much more pronounced than those of their teammates. If a halfback runs the wrong way on first down, the team regroups for second-and-10. If a quarterback throws to the wrong receiver, it could be six points the other way.

Quarterbacks enter the NFL with dreams of fame and fortune and are hit with a dizzying barrage of new terminologies, complicated schemes, shrewd defenses and great expectations.

"[Redskins quarterbacks coach Cam] Cameron told me that I arrived in the league 22 years old and the fans expected me to play like I was 35," Shuler says. You can't blame them. No one can energize a franchise like a highly regarded young thrower. Since recent drafts have included so few prime-time QB prospects, those who do enter the league with glittering credentials are viewed as saviors—an unfair distinction.

Shuler joins New England's Drew Bledsoe, Seattle's Rick Mirer, Tampa Bay's Trent Dilfer, Cincinnati's Jeff Blake, Houston's Steve McNair, Carolina's Kerry Collins and Jacksonville's Mark Brunell in the league's current crop of "Quarterbacks of the Future." Each has tremendous physical skills and packed collegiate resumes, but each has experienced many of the same NFL growing pains. Even Bledsoe, who earned a gigantic contract after a 1994 season in which he helped the Pats lead the NFL in passing, stumbled last year.

"The quarterback is subjected to much more scrutiny than anyone else," says Kevin Gilbride, the Jaguars' offensive coordinator. "The mental aspect is greater. You have to know what you're doing, what the defense is doing and then correct your teammates too. They have to do what you tell them to do. Until a quarterback has such a command of what he's doing, he can't be what everyone expects him to be—the leader of the franchise."

Gilbride's explanation sheds considerable light on why there is a lack of quality quarterbacks in the NFL. Since the pro game is so much more advanced than its collegiate counterpart, one cannot easily predict how well a campus hero will perform on Sundays. College quarterbacks face less sophisticated defenses and often run offenses that make far fewer demands on them than pro attacks. Yes, Mr. All-America threw for 3,000 yards in college. He's 6-5, 220 pounds. But he may not be able to discern quickly enough that a blitzing linebacker these days doesn't necessarily tip off man-to-man coverage in the secondary. Even veterans have trouble with that one. Just ask Neil O'Donnell, who made a hero of ex-Dallas cornerback Larry Brown on a blown read in last year's Super Bowl.

"Sometimes, a guy who is big, strong, fast and has a great arm doesn't get it done," Bengals offensive coordinator Bruce Coslet says. "He just doesn't get better. He doesn't work enough. Or outside interests get in the way. Another guy may not be as fast or be a little short, but he's a winner."

Some players have an edge coming in thanks to the offenses they ran in college. Cameron reports that rookie Mark Hartsell adjusted quickly to the team's terminology

McNair (9), Blake (8) and all their young, highly touted QB peers will experience growing pains—like Moon before them.

VINCENT MANNIELLO/SPORTSCHROME

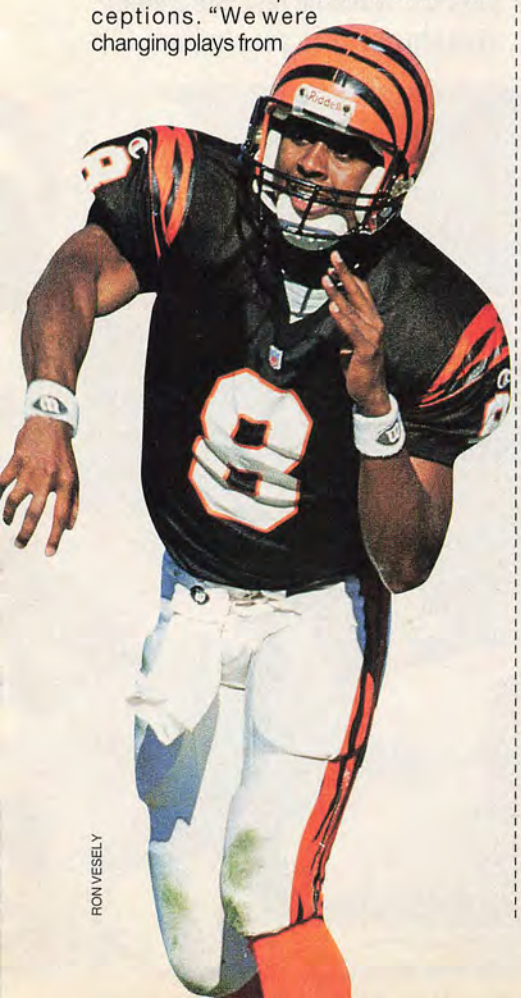
ROB TRINGALI JR./SPORTSCHROME

and scheme because he played at Boston College for Dan Henning, a former NFL head coach. Houston's McNair, on the other hand, had plenty to learn last year because his Alcorn State offense was wide open but not as intricate as professional systems.

The tough transition into the pros is nothing new for quarterbacks. Houston offensive coordinator Jerry Rhome says that in the 1960s, former Dallas Cowboys coach Tom Landry used to figure college passers needed five years to develop into capable pros. Young quarterbacks need time to learn, and they need the luxury of continuity within the coaching staff. Gilbride points out that Warren Moon had five different offensive coordinators during his first six years in Houston. Once Gilbride arrived—and stayed—in town, Moon became a Pro Bowl regular. And we're talking about a veteran here. Imagine how such turnover would affect a rookie.

Fans and media don't want to hear about such things. Quarterbacks are paid millions to deliver results now, not in five years. Teams spend first-round picks on quarterbacks because of need, not as some luxury. When the starter falters or, just as likely, gets hurt, teams are forced to throw the newcomers into action—often with disastrous results.

"Everything just ran together the first year," says Shuler, who started eight games and threw three TD passes and seven interceptions. "We were changing plays from



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week to week. I'd think I had the offense down pat one week, then the game plan would come in for the next game, and it would be like we were running a different offense."

JEFF BLAKE MAY HAVE SPENT HIS first two NFL seasons with the New York Jets as a mere afterthought in the team's quarterback plans, but he didn't approach his third-string status frivolously. He did his homework and never stopped learning. Blake, a sixth-round draft choice, knew the Jets had invested more money in Browning Nagle than in him, and that Boomer Esiason was a proven winner. So much for any opportunities to play. Here's your clipboard, kid. Try to stay out of the way.

It was more of the same when Cincinnati claimed Blake off waivers in 1994. He dutifully backed up David Klingler, the Bengals' quarterbacking hope for the future. Make that former quarterback of the future. When an injury sidelined Klingler after seven games, Blake stepped in and performed like a guy who'd been starting, not watching, for four seasons. Last year, Blake was one of the NFL's most exciting passers, a classic bomber who produced a pile of big plays. He led the AFC with 28 touchdown passes, set a team record with 326 completions and threw for the second-most yards (3,822) in Cincinnati history. Blake may have been only 6 feet tall and a long shot from a relatively obscure program (East Carolina), but he was poolside in Honolulu last February, loving life at the Pro Bowl.

"When he got his chance, he was ready," says Coslet, who was the head man in New York when Blake was there. "He stayed after practice and prepared as if he had been the starter. A lot of guys don't do that. They get their chance and they blow it."

Although Blake was a conscientious film student and a hard worker in practice, the best way to learn how to be an NFL quarterback is in game situations.

"There's a difference between practice speed and game speed," Shuler says. "And from what I'm told, there's another difference between game speed and playoff speed. Everybody in the NFL can run—not just the secondary, the wide receivers and the backs. The big guys up front can run too. In college, I never worried about being outrun by a defensive lineman. In the NFL, I have to worry."

Before a coach exposes his quarterback's body to those speedy defenders, he must first train the young passer's mind. According to Cameron, the process in Washington is not a gradual one. The 'Skins hit Shuler and Frerotte with the entire offensive package right away, piling it on to see what they could handle and assimilate. Rather than expect them to drown, Cameron and Washington head coach Norv Turner wanted to see if the two rookies could swim. Shuler at first had trouble staying above water because he missed the beginning of camp, but Frerotte says his collegiate background helped him. Because Tulsa ran a pro-style offense, Frerotte was familiar with Washington's philosophy and even some of its terminology.

During their rookie seasons, both Frerotte and Shuler operated offenses that weren't as sophisticated as they could have been. And that helped. When Shuler went down with an ankle injury in the seventh week of the '94 season, Frerotte took over and responded with a 226-yard, two-TD performance that earned him NFC Offensive Player of the Week honors.

When a team is forced to start a rookie or second-year quarterback, coaches often pare down the offense. Why ask a relative novice to do everything when he clearly isn't ready. Last season, McNair became the starter in the second half of Week 14 when first-teamer Chris Chandler contracted mononucleosis. Rhome limited McNair's responsibilities considerably. It worked. McNair was 2-0 as a starter, throwing for 569 yards in two-plus games, with three touchdown passes and only one interception.

"What he did the last three games was limited to what he and I did after practices," Rhome says. "The worst thing a player can do is go onto the field and try to perform what he can't do."

Coslet views the preparation of a young starter differently. He maintains that when Blake took over in Cincinnati, the Bengals tailored the game plan to Blake's strengths

Shuler: "Missing just two weeks of camp put me a year behind."

MICHAEL C. HEBERT/SPURLOCK PHOTOGRAPHY

rather than abridge the playbook. Instead of using a lot of straight drops, Coslet allowed Blake to scramble to find clear passing lanes over taller linemen. He took advantage of Blake's superior long-passing skills. It helped that Blake had three years of exposure to NFL offenses, but Coslet knew enough to give his young quarterback plays he could execute rather than forcing him into a system that could foster failure.

Young quarterbacks really begin to develop when the first year's merry-go-round stops spinning. During the off-season, the passers can get into the classroom with coaches and find out exactly why that throw against Dallas was intercepted. Frerotte says the off-season serves as an excellent tool for teaching quarterbacks how to study film. "We learn how to pick out weaknesses in defenses," Frerotte says. "In college, we didn't have a lot of time to watch film, so we were just looking for where everybody lined up." Rhome predicts fans will see a big improvement in McNair this season thanks to more relaxed teaching sessions during March, April and May.

"That's where the real work takes place," Rhome says. "Steve's not even the same guy he was last year. He's more confident and should be calling plays correctly. He'll also be better with audibles. He's light years ahead of last year."

That's the way it goes with NFL quarterbacks. They grow each year. Cameron says Shuler and Frerotte made their biggest jumps during the past off-season, their second in the league. But experience and knowledge are just parts of the complete picture. Truly outstanding quarterbacks must wrap the mental and physical aspects with the less teachable qualities of leadership and confidence. Quarterbacks who can read defenses and throw but can't exert their will to succeed over the rest of the team don't win championships.

"The confidence factor is crucial," Gilbride says. "A player must know things well enough and believe in himself. Even if he has the other things necessary to be a great quarterback, he has to perform with aplomb and panache. He needs an inner aura and belief that he's special. That's what gets teams to the next level."

Shuler for one, understands what Gilbride is saying and feels some of those qualities blossoming within himself.

"When you have that self-confidence, you can let your teammates know that you think you can get it done," Shuler says. "Even if you don't know everything, if you make them think you do, you'll succeed."

Of course, it helps to get into training camp on time. ★

Young Bledsoe beat the odds by tearing up the league in '94 but, more typically, stumbled in '95.

GREG BANNER

The November Chevrolet Truck **SPORT** word Puzzle Solved.

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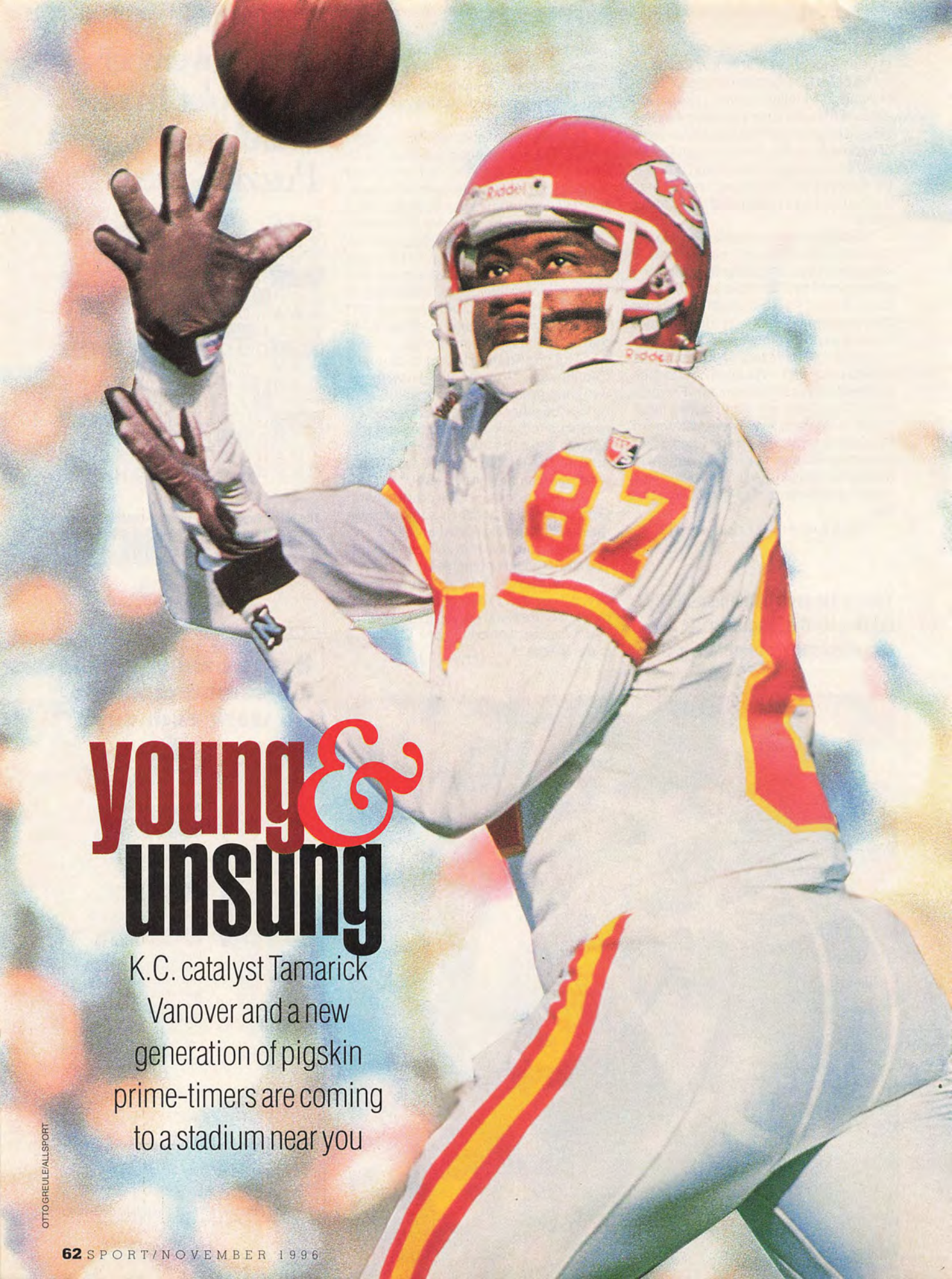

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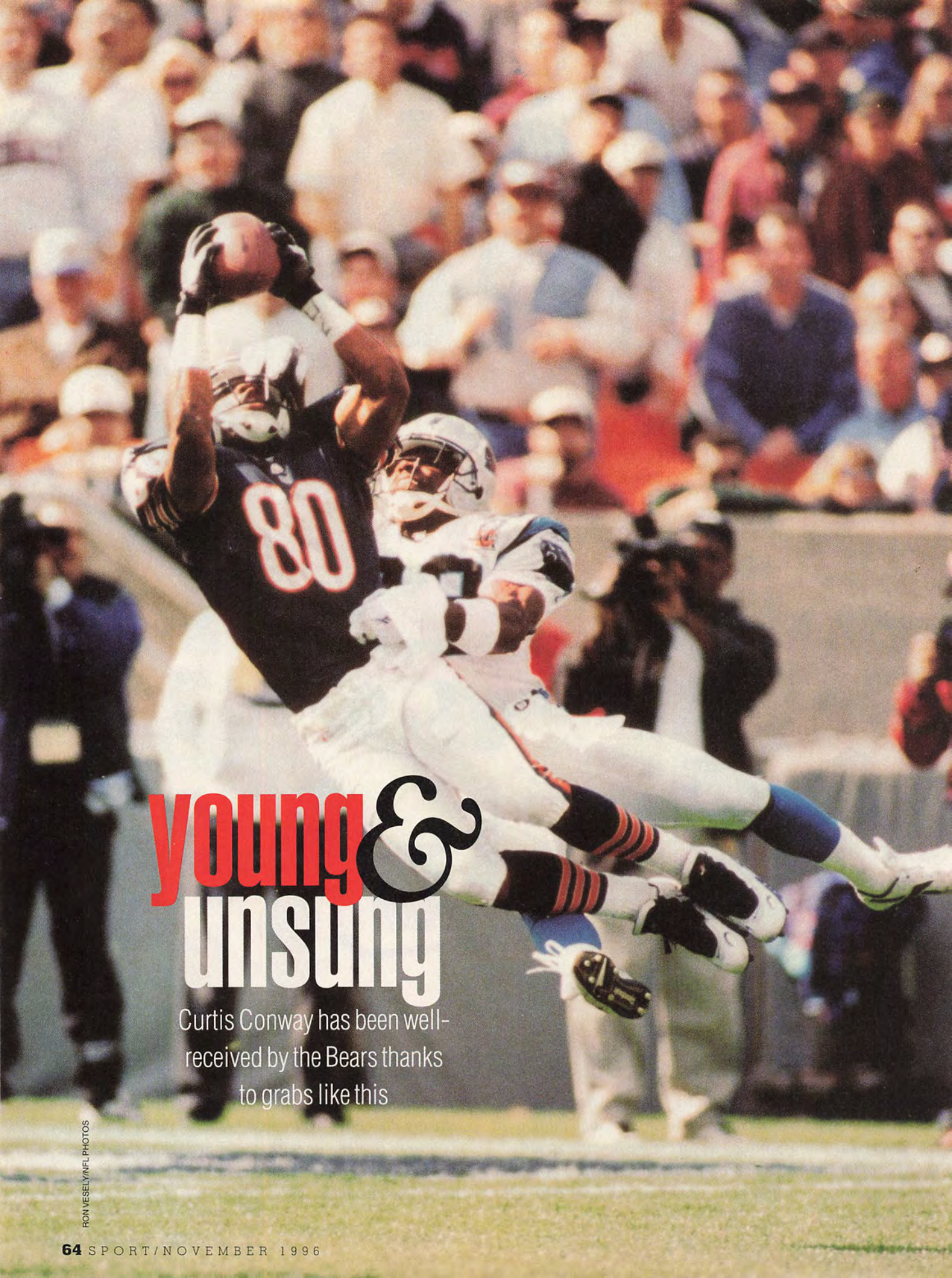

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Curtis Conway has been well-received by the Bears thanks to grabs like this

RON VESELY/NFL PHOTOS

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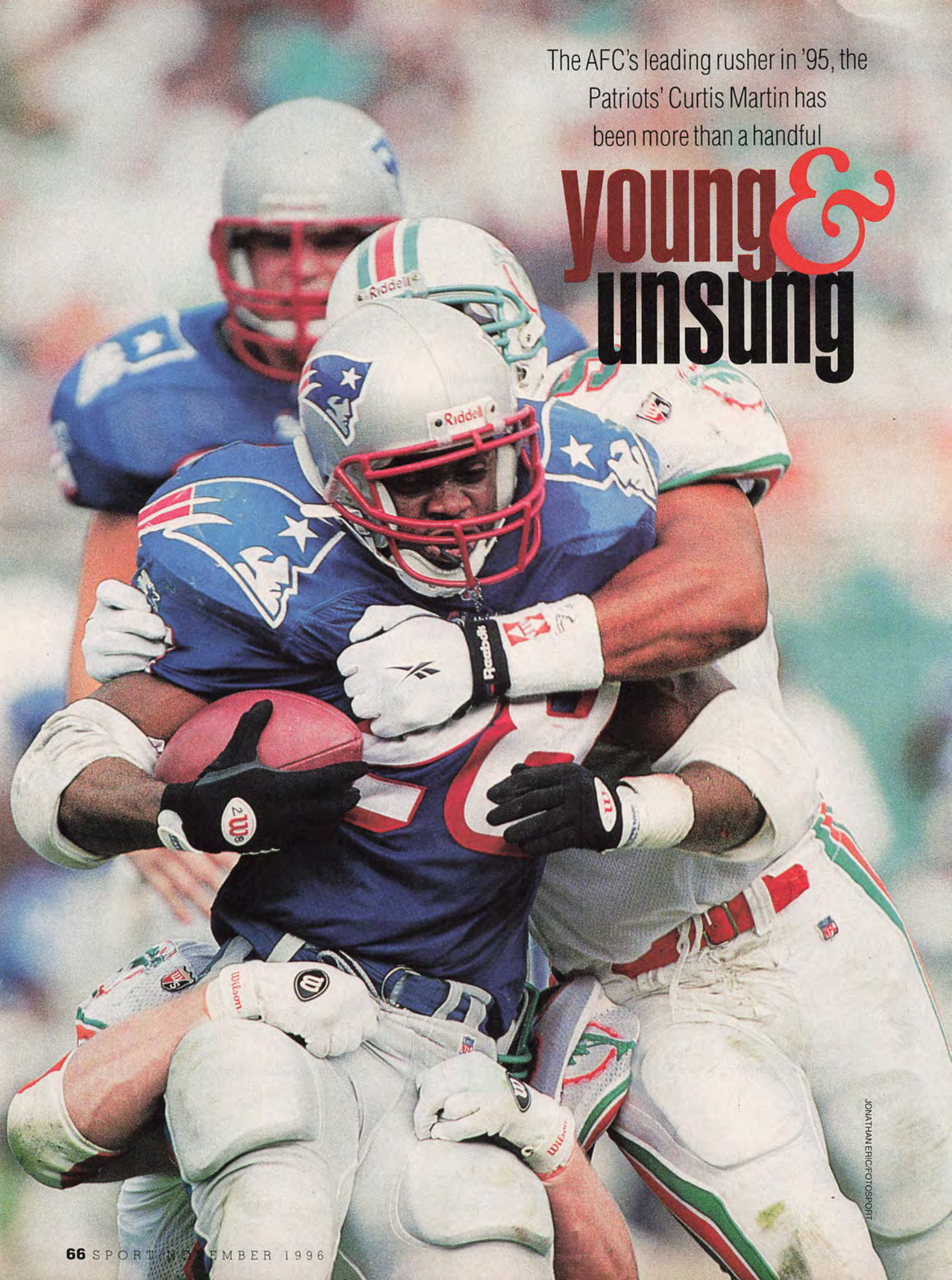

The AFC's leading rusher in '95, the Patriots' Curtis Martin has been more than a handful

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THE META-MOORE

Detroit's Herman Moore Has Evolved into One of the NFL's Elite Wide Receivers/By Greg Guss

Herman Moore is a butterfly—a silver- and blue-streaked monarch floating silently and gracefully in the Sunday afternoon sky.

At first glance, this particular *papillon*, humble and earthy, seems to recede into the background, almost to disappear when contrasted with the flamboyant, multicolored wings of the renowned Jerry Rice and Michael Irvin. But when his flying days are over, Moore could very well end up on display in a certain museum in Canton, Ohio, right alongside his highly acclaimed contemporaries.

After molting for four seasons in relative anonymity in Detroit, Moore has emerged from his cocoon to share the rarefied air of the receiving elite. In 1995, Moore turned in one of the greatest receiving seasons in football history: an NFL single-season-record 123 receptions for a career-high 1,686 yards and 14 touchdowns.

The image of Moore's 6-3, 210-pound frame soaring above hapless defensive backs is one of the most memorable of the '95 season. "In the air, that's where I feel nobody can stop me," says Moore, who believes a 140-reception year is within his formidable reach. "I feel most comfortable going up over cornerbacks because, quite honestly, it doesn't seem like they have the same ability or athleticism to go up high or maybe the same coordination in midair to make adjustments and catch a pass."

According to ABC-TV analyst and former standout wide receiver Lynn Swann, Moore is one of the most graceful athletes in today's game. "Herman Moore has the softest hands of anybody I've ever seen play football," Swann says. "When he catches the football, you don't hear a sound. It's like the ball just becomes a part of him. There's a certain fluidity that is uniquely Herman Moore's."

Lions quarterback Scott Mitchell, who not coincidentally broke single-season team records for passing yards, touchdowns and completions in '95, believes that Moore is just as important to the success of the "Great Lakes" offense as All-Pro running back Barry Sanders. "Herman's a big part of why we have the No. 1 offense in the league," says Mitchell. "His size and leaping ability make my job a whole lot easier."

There was nothing easy about Moore's transition from All-America wide receiver at Virginia to the NFL and having to live up to the expectations that came with being the 10th player selected in the 1991 draft. Moore quickly learned what it was like to be a caterpillar again, crawling around in the dirt, wondering if he'd ever fly as a pro.

Having played nearly every game of his college career in daylight, Moore struggled to catch the ball under the Silverdome lights. "When we played our first preseason game, that was only the second time I had ever played under the lights," Moore explains. "I dropped three or four passes in a row, and they were just little five-yard flat routes."

The rumors started almost immediately. "The first-round draft choice is a bust." "The kid can't even catch the ball." In fact, Moore had only 11 catches for 135 yards and no touchdowns in his rookie season.

"It got so bad that I actually questioned whether or not I wanted to continue to play football," Moore says. "And it wasn't the media who was criticizing me. It was my teammates. That's one thing I've learned about this game. There is a lot of jealousy and envy, and there are a lot of players who really don't want you to succeed. There's a lot of selfishness and it's unfortunate."

The answer, it turned out, was not contact lenses, as the team prescribed, but rather adjusting his head to avoid looking directly into light banks.

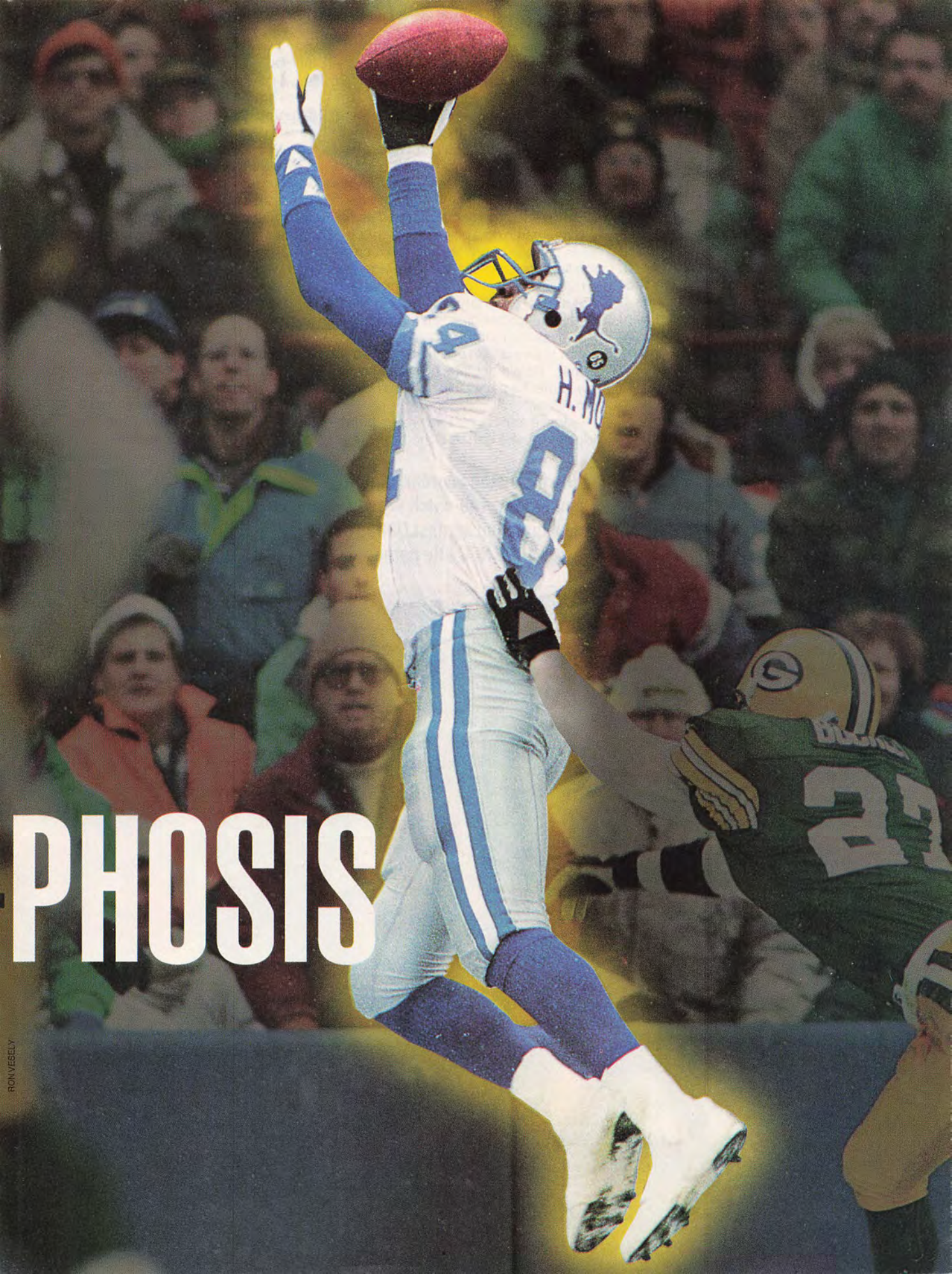
"There are certain places in the Silverdome where you just can't see the ball," Moore says. "And now I know where those places are."

From a personal and professional standpoint, the disparity between his rookie year and 1995 is not lost on Moore. "I felt like I couldn't go any lower, and now I'm right there at the top, if not on top. That's excluding Jerry, of course."

Moore's metamorphosis from disappointing rookie to record-breaking All-Pro was one of gradual improvement. Since his first season, Moore has increased his reception and touchdown totals each year. "The amazing part about it is that I didn't feel like I really had to do any extra work to make all those catches last year. It seemed easier catching those 123 balls than it did catching 51 back in 1992," Moore says.

After being named a Pro Bowl alternate following the 1994 season, Moore beat out the likes of Michael Irvin, Cris Carter and Isaac Bruce to earn a start alongside Rice in the '96 Pro Bowl.

"This past year was particularly gratifying because I was voted into the Pro Bowl by my peers," says Moore. "That meant more to me than the records or


-PHOSIS
RON VESELY

all the numbers."

Every great athlete seems to have to go through this evolutionary process—to be compared to his predecessors before his name can stand alone. Moore has been compared to Rice, just as Rice was compared to John Jefferson. And like Rice, Moore has finally earned the right to fly solo.

"There's always going to be guys who are skeptical and say, 'he's overrated.' And those are the people I like going against because then you put them in their place," says Moore. "That's the cocky side of me that comes out. I look for the challenges. If you knock me down, I don't even want you to help me up because I'm going to come back after you and put you on your back."

Perhaps one of the most difficult connections for fans and the media to make is the one between the warrior on the field and the person off the field. And as hard as he has worked to achieve his current All-Pro status, Moore has worked equally diligently to maintain a "normal" life off the field.

"If you don't know me, then I come off as a person who's quiet," Moore says. "But I actually talk to the kids, and that's what they like about me around here. I stay late and try to give an autograph to everybody. I try to oblige these people because I believe it's an athlete's responsibility to give something back to the community.

"People have told us that as professional athletes our time is valuable, and that unless someone is offering us money it's not worth our time. But I believe it is worth it to stop and say hi and scribble your name on a piece of paper."

In this age of private jets and memorabilia-show appearance fees, Moore is a throwback to a more innocent era, if not a total anomaly. His agent, Brad Blank, describes him as a modern-day Renaissance man. "Herman is interested in many different things," says Blank. "He's articulate, he manages his own time, he paints. He's truly a unique individual."

Moore admits that he enjoys painting—when he can find the time. "I've got a wife, two kids, a dog and I'm a homeowner, plus I have a little job playing professional football," says Moore. "So I haven't had too much time lately to paint. It's a time-consuming thing. I just try to do it to relax when I have some free time."

With his vision in order, Moore envisions a 140-catch season and a matchup against Dallas in the 1996 NFC title game.

Aside from painting old barns and torching cornerbacks, football's da Vinci says his pursuit of culture and entertainment is virtually unlimited. "I do quite a few things. I do indulge in art. I enjoy reading. I enjoy cinema. There aren't many things I don't like."

Moore says he can handle not getting the professional respect he deserves, but he cannot accept generalizations that portray all athletes as criminals or egomaniacs.

"Sometimes when they talk about the character of players and how they're greedy or criminals and all this, I think to myself, 'They don't know me,' " says Moore. "I'm nothin' like that. I'm not the controversial player or person. I'm not a troublemaker. I'm just a regular, ordinary guy. I'm happy and I want to continue to enjoy what I'm doing. It goes beyond the money and the recognition. I want to enjoy what I'm doing, otherwise I can't do it." ★

STEVE WOLTMANN

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S. Pippen	Chi	P. Ewing	NY	J. Kidd	Dal	C. Laettner	Atl	R. Strickland	Por	D. Schrempf	Sea

L. Sprewell	GS	V. Baker	Milw	J. Starks	NY	C. Mullin	GS	D. Scott	Orl	G. Muresan	Was
H. Grant	Orl	I. Rider	Min	S. Elliot	SA	C. Oakley	NY	N. Anderson	Orl	A. Sabonis	Port
K. Anderson	Cha	K. Johnson	Pho	C. Ceballos	LAL	T. Gugliotta	Min	M. Blaylock	Atl	R. Smits	Ind
D. Coleman	Phi	N. Van Exel	LAL	C. Weatherspoon	Phi	D. Rodman	Chi	A. Mason	NY	V. Divac	LAL
C. Robinson	Port	S. Smith	Ind	D. Manning	Pho	J. Hornacek	Uta	H. Hawkins	Sea	D. Radja	Bos

D. Harper	NY	R. Seikaly	GS	R. Wallace	Was	C. Drexler	Hou	E. Jones	LAL	L. Ellis	Den
K. Garnett	Min	L. Vaught	LAL	A. Iverson	Phi	M. Finley	Pho	B. Reeves	Van	V. Maxwell	Phi
J. Stackhouse	Phi	S. Bradley	NJ	G. Anthony	Van	M. Camby	Tor	C. Person	SA	D. Brown	Bos
R. Rogers	LAL	D. Ferry	Cle	M. Elie	Hou	T. Kukoc	Chi	O. Polynice	Sac	J. Dumars	Det
J. Smith	GS	S. Perkins	Sea	M. Abdul-Rauf	Den	D. Stoudamire	Tor	R. Horry	Hou	R. Harper	Chi

O. Thorpe	Det	W. Person	Pho	D. Davis	Ind	J. Newman	Mil	S. Marcilionus	Sac	T. Edney	Sac
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HOTSHOT

Bryon Russell

Down 12 points to Portland entering the third quarter of Game 1 in the first round of last spring's NBA playoffs, Jerry Sloan turned to his bench and said the unlikeliest thing: "Bryon!" You'd understand if Utah Jazz forward Bryon Russell gave his coach a You-mean-me? look. Though a starter early in the season, Russell had fallen to the 12th man on the squad. He led the Jazz in DNPs with 29.

So in went Russell, and he put up a fourth-quarter line—12 points, two rebounds, two steals, a block and an assist—that rallied Utah to victory. Said Sloan afterward, "He's going to play now." For the hard-edged Sloan, this amounts to gushing.

Russell's performance against the Blazers proved to be no accident. He scored 15 points as the Jazz eliminated San Antonio in Game 6 of the Western semifinals. In Game 3 of the conference finals against Seattle, he had 24 points, 10 rebounds and three steals while locking up the Sonics' Detlef Schrempf.

An athletic, high-energy type, Russell is just the sort of young, jazzy player Utah has lacked for years. Yet after Russell's productive rookie year, Sloan fiddled with his playing time throughout the last two seasons, starting him occasionally, leaving him out of the rotation for weeks. "I don't understand how you can go from being a rookie All-Star to not playing at all," Russell says. "But I never said anything. I just kept my head up."

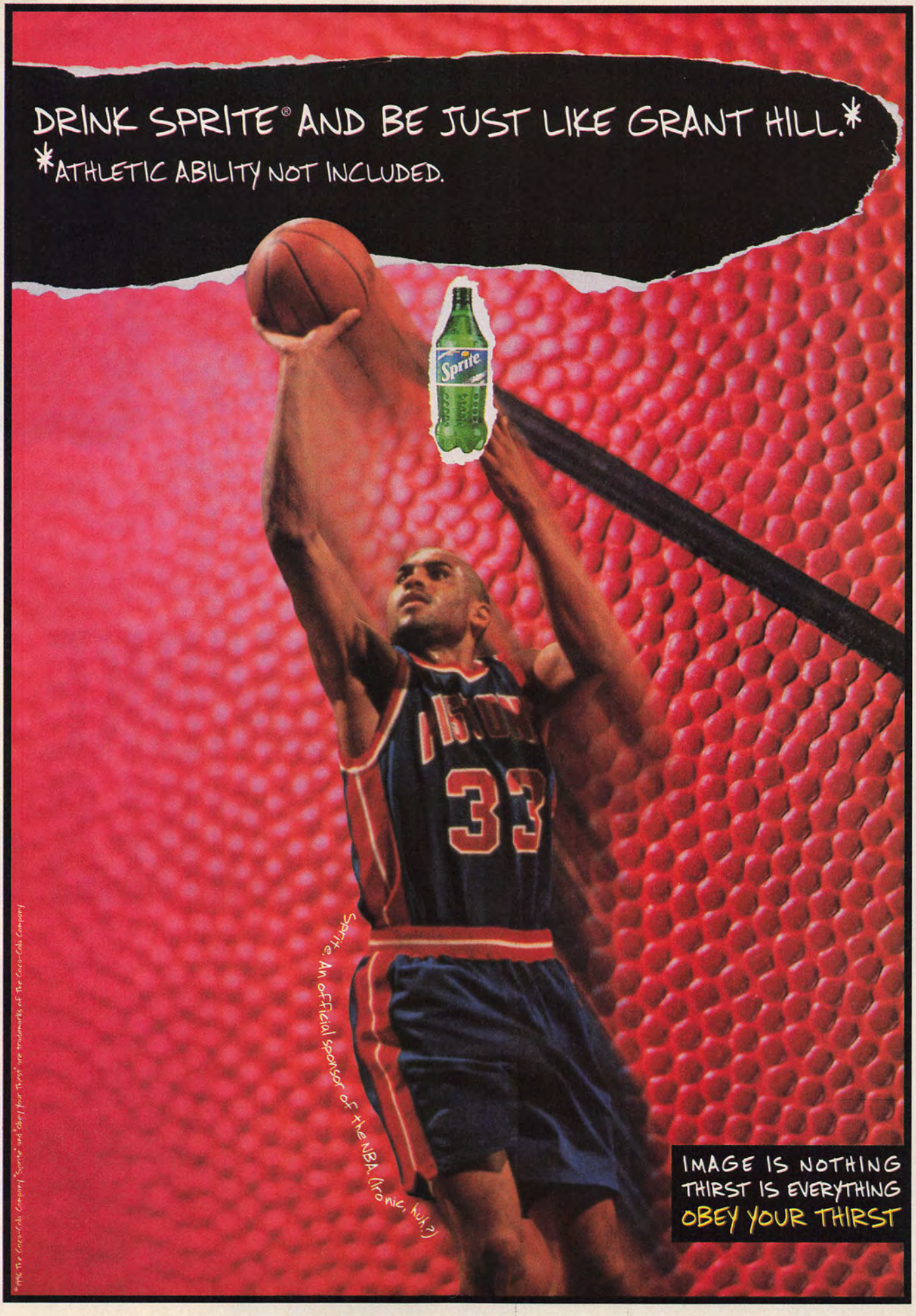
As much as his postseason play brought attention to Russell, so did the misreading of his first name as "Byron." NBC's Bill Walton and Seattle coach George Karl both lavished praise on "Byron." Obviously, the unorthodox spelling trips people up. "Walton told me he was sorry about it," says Russell. "I told him: 'Bill, don't worry about it. There are a lot of other people that do the same thing.' "

Whether Byron or Bryon, Russell, selected 45th in the 1993 draft, has made a name for himself. "I knew I could play. It was just a matter of getting a chance."

—Jeff Weinstock

Hitting the High Notes

ANDY HAYT/NBA PHOTOS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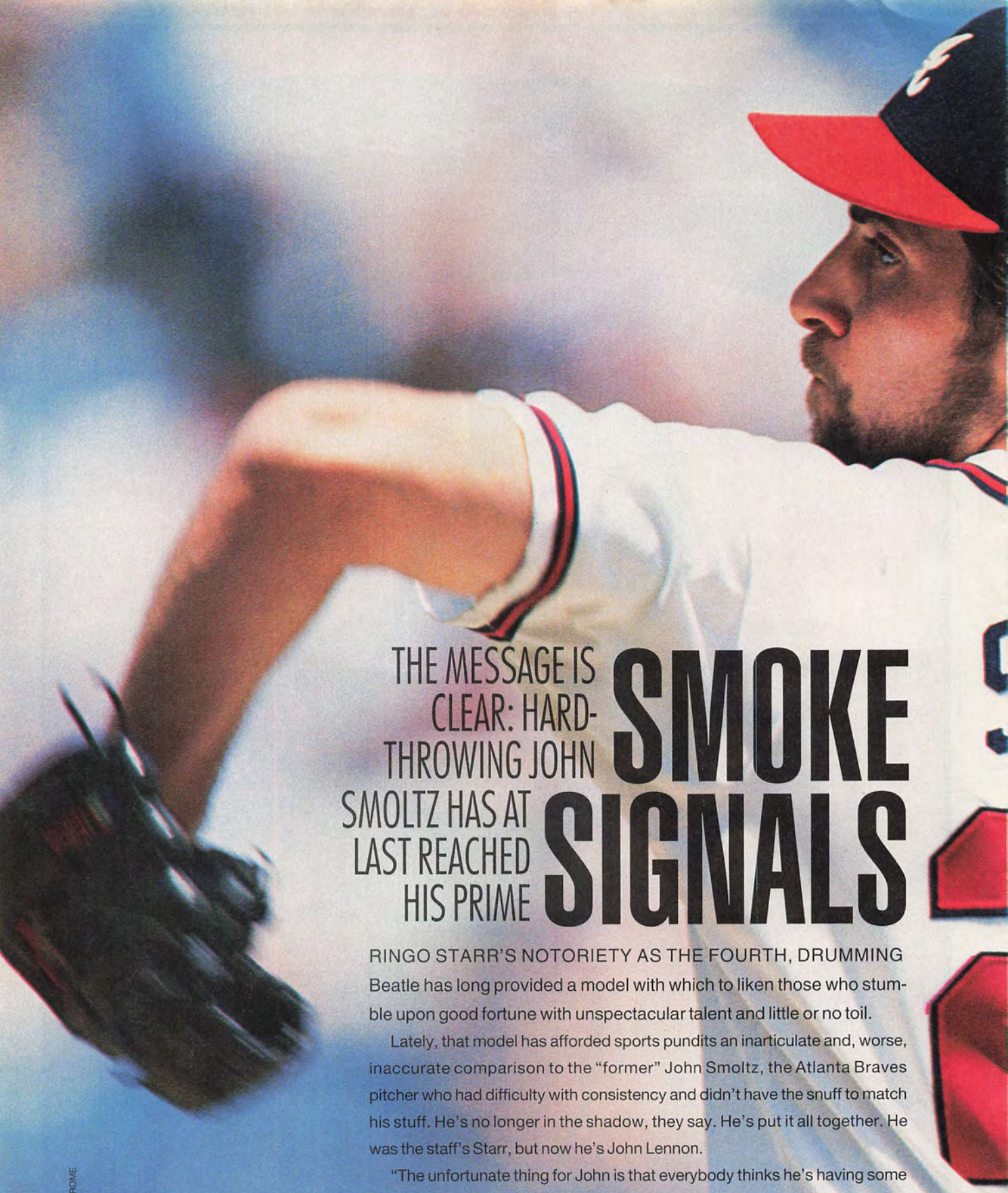


THE MESSAGE IS CLEAR: HARD-THROWING JOHN SMOLTZ HAS AT LAST REACHED HIS PRIME

SMOKE SIGNALS

RINGO STARR'S NOTORIETY AS THE FOURTH, DRUMMING Beatle has long provided a model with which to liken those who stumble upon good fortune with unspectacular talent and little or no toil.

Lately, that model has afforded sports pundits an inarticulate and, worse, inaccurate comparison to the "former" John Smoltz, the Atlanta Braves pitcher who had difficulty with consistency and didn't have the snuff to match his stuff. He's no longer in the shadow, they say. He's put it all together. He was the staff's Starr, but now he's John Lennon.

"The unfortunate thing for John is that everybody thinks he's having some kind of tremendous year pitching-wise that he hasn't had," says George Harrison—uh, Tom Glavine. "The fact of the matter is, the guy's been a good

BY PAUL M. JOHNSON

RICH KANE/SPORTSCHROME

GIOLZ
29

pitcher for the last five or six years. He's throwing the ball like he always has, he's just getting better results."

And more attention. A slew of midseason stories, penned sometime between his spectacular 14-game winning streak and starting assignment in the All-Star game, pegged him as baseball's best pitcher and the ace of the most dominant staff around. And although Smoltz usually passes on reading the daily papers, it didn't take rabbit ears to pick up the discussion.

"I have a lot of trouble with how, during points of a season or career, they can label a 'best pitcher,' or 'ace,' " Smoltz says. "What does 'ace' mean? It's a temporary label. If I lose four in a row, do I lose that? I've been called that at different times throughout my career. It doesn't mean a whole lot to me."

Not now, perhaps, with the maturity that comes with more than 250 career big-league starts and having endured the up-and-down travails of an organization that went from being a bomb to "the bomb" in one hot season.

But words from baseball's laptop critics at one point did wreak havoc on Smoltz's psyche. Reaching the bigs at age 21 midway through the Braves' 106-loss season of 1988, the extroverted, self-described people-pleasing Smoltz—nicknamed "Marmaduke" by veteran teammate Dale Murphy—brandished an arm that was at ease at the major-league level,

Dogged throughout his career for not reaching his huge potential, Smoltz has delivered big in '96.

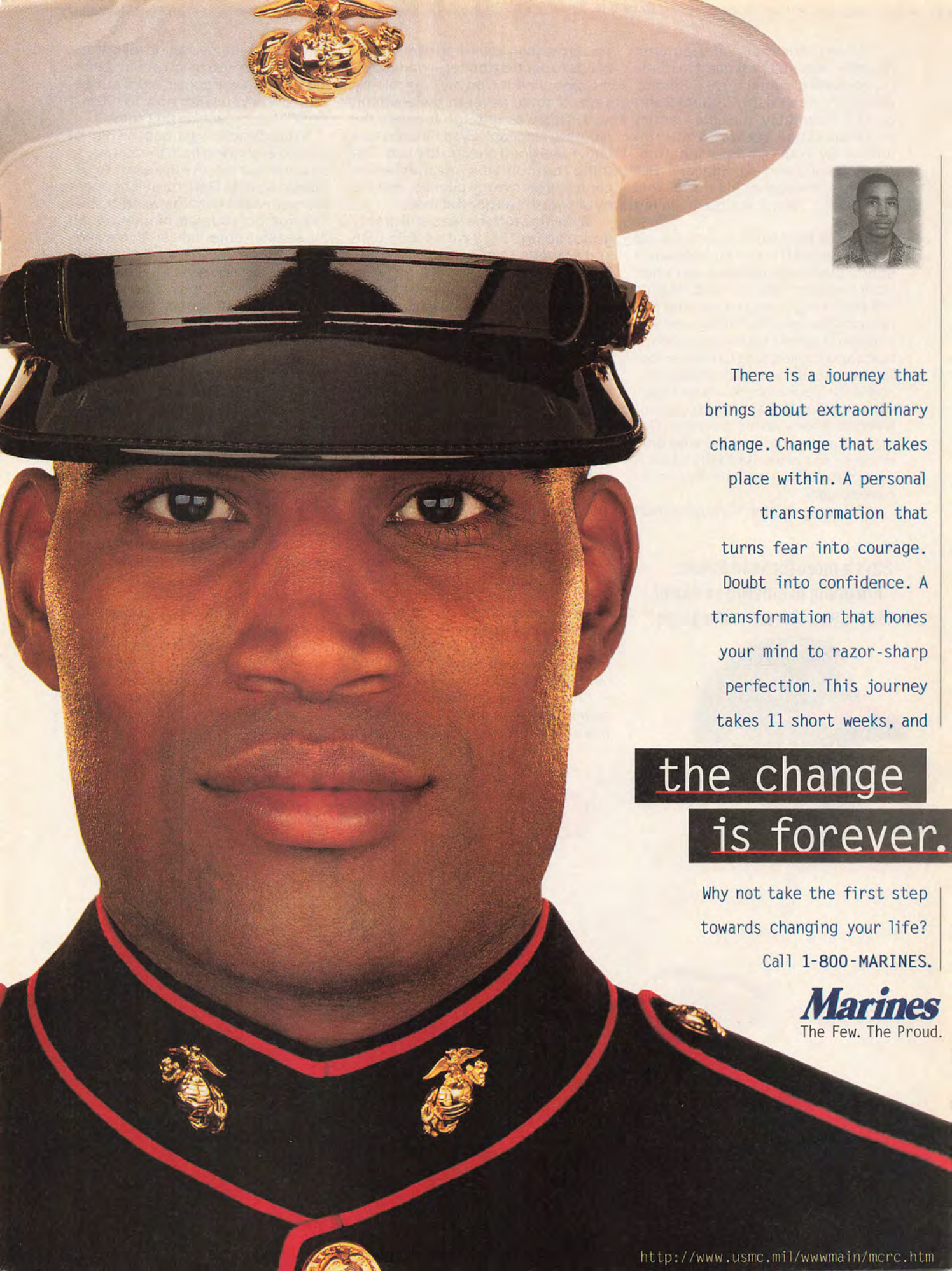
TOM DiPACE

but focus and confidence that may have required additional seasoning. Starting the '89 season in the Braves' rotation, Smoltz posted 11 wins and a 2.10 ERA in the first half and became the youngest Braves pitcher ever to earn a spot on the All-Star team. That yardstick of achievement dogged him forthwith as he closed the season 12-11 with an ERA close to three.

"It's all because of potential," says the 29-year-old Smoltz. "It's all because people picked me as Cy Young, or people picked me for this or that.... When the potential that's put on you is far greater than your actual potential, that's a lot for a young person to go through.

"And I thought I was able to handle it by giving everybody the time. I did every interview. I look at all the things I used to sit by my locker and think about and all the questions I answered. I said I wasn't going to let it get to me and I wasn't going to let the press or media dictate certain things in my career. But it eventually happened. The more I had to try to defend and explain things, the more I let things crawl into my head. The pressure of going out there and competing is hard enough; the pressure of other people's expectations on your shoulders makes it harder."

That pressure, exacerbated by a career-worst 3.85 ERA in 1990 and a 2-11 start in '91, reached such a degree that Smoltz, despairing, became among the first athletes to enlist the support of a sports psychologist. The result: a 12-2 second-half mark in '91 and a brilliant postseason in which he allowed just five runs in four starts, though the Braves went down at the hands of the Minnesota Twins in the World Series.



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The late-summer, early-autumn mastery was still prevalent in many baseball minds entering '92. Smoltz, at age 25, had hastily matured and owned, debatably, the elite starting arm in baseball. He was preferred among Cy Young prognosticators. Again, heightened expectations. But this time, the tool of his trade—his arm, specifically the elbow—failed him.

"It's one thing to take to the mound the focus and mental approach sports psychologists give you when you're healthy," says Smoltz, "but it's another thing to try to take that approach when you're hurting and you know that when you throw a pitch, it hurts and it takes time to recover before you can throw that pitch again."

Floating bone chips, which created occasional pain and frequent twinges, shackled his progress. Despite the effects, Smoltz, who only once in his career had failed to answer the starting bell, elected not to have surgery.

"The one way the injury really hurt was in preventing me from working on things to become better—working on the side, working on my control," he says. "I could never throw anything soft. This was enough to make my progress stagnant. Even though I was hurt, I was good enough to pitch. The thing I couldn't do was master my control, improve my pitches, and the quality wasn't as good at times."

With his stuff, he was still plenty good, going 15-12 with a 2.85 ERA and a league-leading 215 strikeouts in 1992 before taking a slight step back in '93, when he equaled his prior season's win total but saw his control lapse and his ERA jump to 3.62. In strike-shortened '94, Smoltz's pain level and ERA rose together, and he won only six of 21 starts. Once the season was canceled, he opted for surgery.

Consolidating a healthy elbow, fresh resolve, and the ideal time frame ("I knew my peak wasn't going to come until age 27 to 31," he says), Smoltz went 12-7 with a 3.18 ERA in '95, becoming the first starting pitcher in franchise history to whiff more than a batter an inning. This year, he reached double-digits in wins faster than any National Leaguer in 92 years and won his 20th before September on the strength of a commanding fastball, a power slider and an evolving forkball. The designation that once shadowed him is at long last rendering a surplus of wins.

"I've always said I didn't realize how hard it was going to be having the so-called 'best stuff,' " says Smoltz. "It hurt me early in my career. I didn't worry too much about 'pitching'. But it gives you an extra advantage once you learn how to pitch. I think I'm approaching that stage."

While Smoltz ascribes the glut of wins to everything from the surgery to experience on an elite staff to renewed trust in God, he still peppers his sentences with the word "luck." The numbers sustain him: Although his season-entering career earned-run average (3.53) was virtually the same as Glavine's (3.52), Smoltz had won 34 fewer games. And despite three separate seasons with ERAs around three, he still hadn't been more than a 15-game winner until this year; Glavine, in contrast, won 22 games in '93 with a 3.20 ERA, while Avery won 18 with a 3.38 ERA in '91.

Whatever the formula has been—and it's surely a little of everything—Smoltz would like to bottle it.

"Greg Maddux always told me, 'When you're going through something successful, take time to notice how you're doing it.' Because everybody takes for granted and forgets how they did it. When you're going good, the mechanics and everything flow, you're in a so-called zone, you don't take time to figure it out."

The zone might have sucked this one in for good.

"I think I've kind of been in a time lapse," says Smoltz. "I've kind of been stuck for two or three years, and now I feel like I'm going to emerge as one of the better pitchers in the game." ★

Says a more focused Smoltz: "I'm going to emerge as one of the better pitchers in the game."

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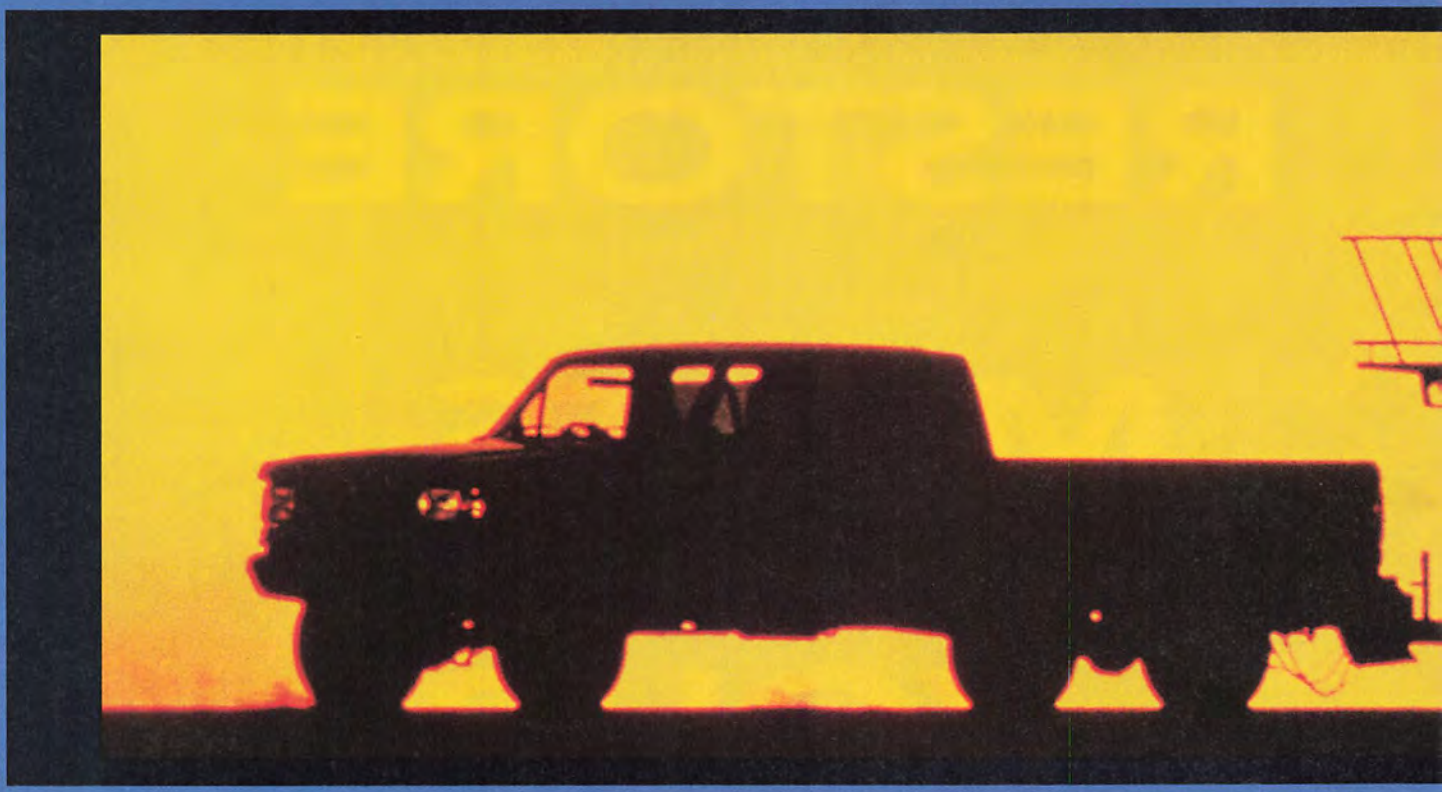

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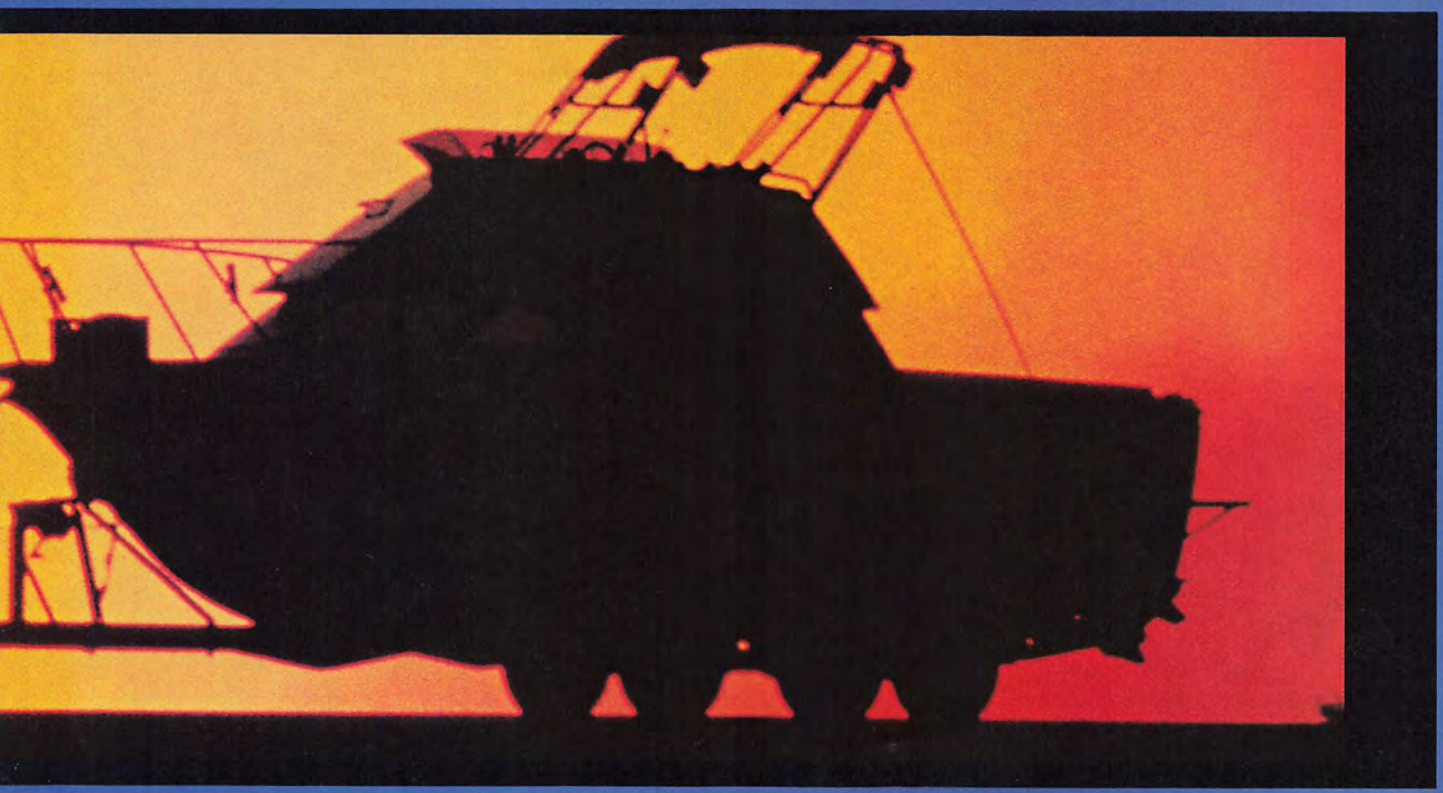

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NHL PREVIEW

AVS AND THE AV-NOTS

Gretzky's in New York, but the Colorado Avalanche Are the Great Ones/By Barry M. Bloom

Imagine. Wayne Gretzky in a New York Rangers uniform. Gretzky in the land of Namath, Mantle, Reggie, Clyde Frazier and Saint Messier. A decade ago, the arrival of the Great One on the Great White Way would've been cause for resplendent joy.

Gretzky, at 35, may be the NHL's all-time leading scorer with 837 goals, but he no longer buries the puck with regularity. He's now merely the Good One, whose 23 goals and 102 points last season ranked him 12th in the league.

Gretzky would have led the Rangers—Mark Messier had 99 points—but so what? In New York,

M. DIGIROLAMO/BRUCE BENNETT STUDIOS

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BOB ROSATO

Paired with Messier, the Good Gretzky won't make a difference, unlike Colorado's Vanbiesbrouck.

Messier is a hockey god. In 1994, when Gretzky missed the playoffs with the L.A. Kings, Messier guaranteed a Stanley Cup to long-suffering Rangers fans. Captain Mess survived in the land of ghosts and dragons, and the Rangers frolicked for the first time in 54 years.

Will the addition of Gretzky make the Rangers stronger contenders this season? Doubtful.

GMs have noticed the pattern of the last two seasons. New Jersey and Colorado, both unheralded and undervalued, won the last two Cups, a first for each franchise. The Avalanche, with enough young talent to stock several international teams when the NHL goes Olympic for the first time in 1998, have the goods to repeat.

Last spring, with Gretzky, Messier, Brett Hull, Mario Lemieux, Eric Lindros and Sergei Fedorov all finished for the season, Colorado's Uwe Krupp and Joe Sakic and Florida's Brian Skrudland and John Vanbiesbrouck were playing for the hardware. Not exactly hockey's elite.

The NHL's playoffs are now superior to the NBA's both in drama and pathos. In '94, the Rangers needed a double-overtime Game 7 goal to beat the Devils in the Eastern Conference finals. Against Vancouver in the finals, the Rangers grabbed a one-goal lead in Game 7 and hung on.

Last season, Sandis Ozolinsh scored in triple overtime as Colorado beat Chicago in the Western Conference semis on foreign ice. In the other series, Detroit's Game 7 victory over the Blues came on Steve Yzerman's goal in double overtime.

But the NHL saved the best for last. Krupp became the first German player to have his name etched on the Cup (not to mention the first to score such a dramatic Cup-winning goal) by stealing a Florida clearing pass, winding up just inside the blue line, and icing Game 4, 1-0, in triple OT. "This is everything I thought it would be," said Krupp, champagne dripping from his damp hair, the Cup-winning goal in Miami Arena coming at 1:06 a.m. "This is a dream come true."

This season, the dreams will be many, but they have all passed by the Good Gretzky.

EASTERN CONFERENCE

ATLANTIC DIVISION

The balance of power has shifted in the East to the strangest of places: Florida. The **Florida Panthers**, in their fourth season, will need a titanic effort to reach the finals again. This is a team that plays with power, defense and guts. But at this writing, management hadn't shored up an offense that is hapless when having to come from behind.

"When they first put this team together three years ago, nobody knew if we were going to win a game," says Vanbiesbrouck, who underwent off-season shoulder surgery and missed the World Cup competition. "We have a lot of character, a lot of heart and a lot of young kids ready to play."

The **Philadelphia Flyers** would like to capture some of that magic. Two seasons ago, when Lindros, John LeClair and Mikael Renberg were united on the Legion of Doom, the Flyers broke a five-season playoff drought and leapt into the conference finals, losing to New Jersey, the eventual Cup champion. But last spring's second-round loss to the Panthers was a stunner.

This off-season's signings—center Peter White, defenseman John Stevens and the return of backup goalie Dominic Roussel—won't make a major impact on the Flyers, even as they open the new CoreStates Center.

The collapse of the **New Jersey Devils** was reflected in the satisfied face of Claude Lemieux, Conn Smythe Trophy winner for the Devils in '95, a member of the victorious Avalanche in '96. The Devils became the first Cup defenders since 1970 to miss the playoffs, and New Jersey did little to alter the equation in the off-season. Still, Lemieux blames the collapse on one person: coach Jacques Lemaire.

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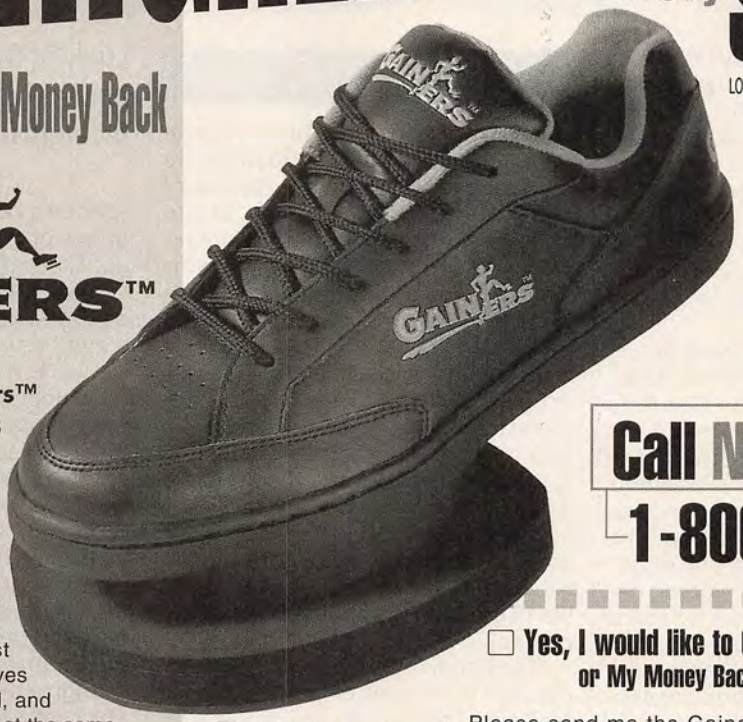

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BOB ROSATO

"For Jacques, obviously I was very happy they didn't make the playoffs," Lemieux says. "When I left there I said thank you. I gave them a lot of credit. And then all I got in return was backstabbing and jabs. I just think that when you act like that, it comes back to haunt you. Even if you dislike someone's personality, you've still got to give them credit for what they do."

The **Tampa Bay Lightning** are on the rise, while the **New York Islanders** and **Washington Capitals** remain copacetic. Before the Flyers were dumped by the Panthers, the Lightning struck, giving Philadelphia all it could handle in a first-round series the Flyers barely survived. The Lightning are a young team that will remain intact, with former Colorado defenseman Craig Wolanin added to the mix.

The Caps, losers to the Penguins in the first round for the second consecutive postseason, need offense. They added Phil Housley, a free-agent defenseman noted for his two-way play, but they need more to duke it out with the big boys. And what of the once mighty Islanders, whose 22-50-10 record last season was their worst since the 1972-73 expansion season? Few changes may mean little improvement, unless one calls adding Craig Fisher, the International Hockey League's leading scorer, a major coup.

Perhaps Mike Bossy is available.

NORTHEAST DIVISION

Few realized at the time that the loss of Ron Francis in the playoffs would eventually mean the demise of the **Pittsburgh Penguins**. Mario Lemieux and Jaromir Jagr were all-world last season, but the smooth-skating Francis, playing the point on a prodigious power play, made that power play tick.

Francis was lost to a broken ankle late in Pittsburgh's five-game, second-round trouncing of the Rangers. During a stunning seven-game loss to Florida in the conference finals, the pressure was put on defenseman Sergei Zubov to respond. He didn't. Now Zubov is gone, traded to Dallas for defenseman Kevin Hatcher, who scored seven of his 15 goals on the power play. Get the picture?

The Penguins will again be dangerous. But the signing of free-agent center Kevin Todd, a 16-goal scorer with Los Angeles last season, probably won't make the difference.

"We were short last year, especially defensively," Lemieux says. "If they make a few trades and improve the team, I'll look forward to being back. If they're really going to try to make a run for the Stanley Cup, so will I."

The **Montreal Canadiens** have closed the old Forum, but one wonders whether the ghosts of so many past Cup winners actually made their way down St. Catherine's Street to the spanking-new Molson Centre. A front-office thrashing and the banishing of goaltender Patrick Roy highlighted the first half of the season. Ultimately, one of the league's youngest teams played way over its head in a spirited run just to make the playoffs. Then, after winning the first two games of the opening round in New York, the Canadiens collapsed and went out in four straight. The club warns the diehards not to expect any more significant changes. Captain Pierre Turgeon may be the first one out if the season again begins poorly.

Look for Super Mario Lemieux and the high-powered Penguins to return to the Cup finals.

After threatening to leave town, the tattered **Hartford Whalers** are staying put for at least another season even though a big season-ticket drive fell short of its target. No big whoop. Nashville and its brand-new arena beckon.

Including Montreal, the Northeast already boasts four new buildings. The lowly **Ottawa Senators** (18 wins, 41 points) opened the Corel Center midway through last season, and despite a flurry of insignificant free-agent signings (Phil Crowe and Denny Lambert—one goal between them last season), aren't ready to ascend to Florida's class.

The **Buffalo Sabres** closed the old

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Auditorium and will usher in the season at Marine Midland Arena without many new faces on their new home ice. And the **Boston Bruins** closed the old Garden with an exhibition game last September. The Fleet Center opened a week later.

The Bruins may be tougher with the additions of left wing Troy Mallette (171 penalty minutes in Ottawa) and defenseman Barry Richter. But the loss of left wing Dave Reid (23 goals, 44 points) to Dallas won't help their sputtering offense. By the way, aren't Ray Bourque and Cam Neely eligible for social security?

WESTERN CONFERENCE

CENTRAL DIVISION

No team in this division has won the Cup since the **Toronto Maple Leafs** in 1967. The **Chicago Blackhawks** are Cupless since 1961, and the **Detroit Red Wings'** 41-year drought is the longest in the league. The Red Wings set an NHL record with 62 regular-season victories, but then flopped big-time in the playoffs for the third consecutive season.

The **Winnipeg Jets**, before soaring off to Phoenix, gave Detroit more problems than expected in a six-game first round. It took every ounce of Detroit's courage to beat St. Louis. Then came the Colorado debacle. When veteran coach Scotty Bowman won the Adams Trophy as coach of the year, he joked he was lucky the voting had been conducted before the playoffs. Bowman was signed up for another season at a reported $950,000. But the injuries that crippled the club deep into the playoffs continued in the off-season. Key defenseman Vladimir Konstantinov tore an Achilles tendon while playing tennis against Fedorov and underwent surgery.

Bowman, who said he was now thinking "year by year," cautioned fans not to expect major changes in the team. "I don't think there is much opportunity for us to do anything big," Bowman says. Take note, though, that Fedorov has fallen out of favor after scoring just twice in 19 playoff games.

The **St. Louis Blues**, **Dallas Stars** and newly born **Phoenix Coyotes** will look for their first sips of champagne from Lord Stanley's coveted chalice. To that end, they have made the most changes. Dallas, which finished out of the playoffs, made four big-time deals, signing free-agent forwards Reid and Pat Verbeek and free-agent goalie Arturs Irbe, and sending Hatcher to Pittsburgh for Zubov.

Verbeek (41 goals and 41 assists for the Rangers on a line with Messier) is the big catch. "Our objective has been to improve our team, specifically in the area of goal scoring," says Dallas general manager Bob Gainey.

That need has been met.

Phoenix is now a four-sport city, and new management realizes it must put a good team on the ice to compete at America West Arena against the NBA Suns. That's what makes last season's trade of star wing Teemu Selanne to the Mighty Ducks so quizzical. But in the off-season, the Coyotes brought in a new coach (Don Hay) and added veteran forwards Jeremy Roenick, Cliff Ronning and Mike Gartner, goalie Darcy Wakaluck and defenseman Brad McCrimmon.

In St. Louis, Keenan is going into the third season of his five-year contractual reign. And after a spat with Gretzky caused the Good One to flee east, one has to wonder if the blades are about to come off.

Keenan, who also doubles as general manager, continued his revolving-door approach to player development. Welcome Jim Campbell, Scott Pellerin, Trent Yawney, Jamie

B. BENNETT/BRUCE BENNETT STUDIOS

McLennan, Marc Bergevin and Joe Murphy to Mikey's little house of horrors. Bergevin and Murphy were nice catches, coming from division rivals Detroit and Chicago, respectively.

Hull, who has had his own tiffs with Keenan and was stripped of his captaincy last season, wonders if the club is heading in the right direction. "We played our hearts out every night," Hull says. "Now this."

Toronto will come back into the fray with a new coach (Mike Murphy) and virtually the same cast of aging characters, who lost in the first round to St. Louis. For Murphy, 45, it is his first head-coaching gig in the NHL. "He's saying he wants to communicate with everybody," says captain Doug Gilmour, who underwent nerve surgery on his left foot during the off-season. "Part of being a good coach is listening to the people around you."

It's also having good people around you. Like the Leafs, the Blackhawks are heading in the wrong direction. Murphy, 29 this month, took his 22 goals and 51 points to the Blues. Bernie Nicholls left for San Jose.

And Roenick, the club's star center, was traded to Phoenix after he took his agent's advice and refused to re-sign as a restricted free agent. At least there's still Stan Mikita's donut shop.

No Central team has won the Cup since Toronto in '67, but Yzerman and the Red Wings have a shot.

PACIFIC DIVISION

By the end of the playoffs, everyone knew the tale of Joey Sakic. The bus carrying his junior hockey team skidded off an icy road in Canada, killing several players. Sakic last season scored 18 playoff goals and won the Smythe Trophy.

But Krupp's story was just as inspiring. Last Oct. 6, Krupp tore his anterior cruciate and medial collateral ligaments in his left knee. After months of rehabilitation, he came back and scored the goal that won the Cup.

"At some point you don't feel like you're a part of the team because you're so far removed," Krupp recalls about the experience. "Especially when you just don't function as a human being. You're on one leg limping around, where you're used to playing professional hockey. It's a bit frustrating."

Now Krupp and the **Colorado Avalanche**, one season removed from Quebec City and only months after winning Denver's first major pro sports championship, have it all ahead of them. Sakic is 27. Peter Forsberg is 23. Ozolinsh is 24. Roy and Krupp, each at 31, are the old men of the team.

Meanwhile, the rest of the teams are trying to catch up. The **Los Angeles Kings** disintegrated last season. In the post-Gretzky era, the Kings are beginning to retool. They began by sending forward Eric Lacroix to Colorado for goalie Stephane Fiset. Two seasons ago in Quebec, Fiset, with a 2.78 goals-against average, was one of the best young goalies in the league. Roy displaced him last season. And so Colorado general manager Pierre Lacroix traded Fiset to L.A. for his own son. Everyone is happy.

"Stephane gives us an established No. 1 goalie who can play among the best in the NHL," says Kings GM Sam McMaster. Add the free-agent signing of center Ed Olczyk (294 goals in 12 seasons) and call it a good start.

The Fiset deal set in motion a round of goalie musical chairs. The Kings' Kelly Hrudy signed with the **San Jose Sharks**, allowing Irbe to move to Dallas. The Sharks lost their bite last season after first-round upset victories (over Detroit and Calgary) in successive postseasons. They went through two head coaches, made a bevy of bad trades and lost 55 games.

The Sharks took a look at Gretzky, thought better of it, and signed center

BOB ROSATO

THE SPORT BALLOT

HART TROPHY (MVP)—
Mario Lemieux, Pittsburgh

NORRIS TROPHY (best defenseman)—
Sandis Ozolinsh, Colorado

ADAMS TROPHY (best coach)—
Marc Crawford, Colorado

VEZINA TROPHY (best goaltender)—
Stephane Fiset, Los Angeles

LADY BYNG TROPHY (sportsmanship)—
Wayne Gretzky, N.Y. Rangers

POSTSEASON PREDICTIONS

DIVISION WINNERS Pittsburgh (Northeast), N.Y. Rangers (Atlantic), Detroit (Central) and Colorado (Pacific).

EASTERN CONFERENCE WINNER Pittsburgh

WESTERN CONFERENCE WINNER Colorado

STANLEY CUP FINALS Colorado over Pittsburgh

Having drunk from the Cup last June, the Avalanche are still thirsty—and primed to repeat.

Nicholls to a two-year deal. Nicholls and Gretzky are the same age (35). Nicholls scored only four fewer goals last season (19).

Al Sims, the club's third head coach in less than a season, says he will stress "hard work, discipline and team play." He better. The Sharks may not have enough players to make a significant dent in the division.

North of the border, the **Edmonton Oilers**, **Calgary Flames** and **Vancouver Canucks** are all rebuilding. The Oilers, far from their glory days, are the next pick to leave the tundra for greener American pastures. Nashville, Atlanta and Portland are all wooing.

The Flames haven't been out of the first round since defeating Montreal for the 1989 Stanley Cup. They brought back center Robert Reichel, who became so disgusted with Calgary management, he played last season in Germany. This off-season, Calgary lost free agents Sheldon Kennedy to Boston and Trent Yawney to St. Louis. The Flame is flickering.

The Canucks may be the strongest of the bunch. They'll have another new coach (Terry Bangen), and Pavel Bure, returning from a season-long knee injury, finally teams with his Russian compatriot Alex Mogilny. Vancouver's only free-agent signing to date was Edmonton left wing David Roberts (three goals, 10 assists).

That leaves the **Mighty Ducks of Anaheim**, the black sheep of the division. After the Selanne trade, the Ducks did become Mighty, making a strong run for the final playoff spot in the West. With Teemu and line mate Paul Kariya teaming, the Ducks were actually fun to watch late last season.

"There's lots of chemistry on this team," says Kariya, the first 50-goal scorer on any of the recent expansion teams. "It's very good for the future. I'm looking forward to next year being a good year for us."

The Ducks, of course, are eying Florida's success with much envy. Both teams joined the league in 1993. The Panthers have been to the finals. Disney's Ducks haven't gone to the dance. That's undoubtedly why they took a quick look at Gretzky. For the money, obviously they didn't like what they saw and instead signed Jari Kurri.

After all, Disney also now possesses controlling interest in the California Angels. Last summer, with club president Tony Tavares also trying to sort out baseball's mess, the hockey club became one lonely mallard.

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FOUR-DOOR FRENZY

CAN TOURING CARS MAKE IT IN AMERICA?

BY RICK VOEGELIN

England may have lost its empire, but Britannia still rules the world of motor racing. Once derided as a nation of shopkeepers, the island kingdom is truly the world's auto racing supermarket. Now the nation that gave Beef Wellington and the Beatles to America is exporting a new product to its former colonies: Touring Car racing.

Although the name "Touring Car" conjures images of stately limousines gliding through manicured grounds, a typical round of the British Touring Car Championship (BTCC) more closely resembles a re-enactment of the Battle of Britain staged with four-door sedans. American race fans raised on a steady diet of hulking NASCAR stock cars and the boom of V8 engines may have difficulty relating to 2.0-liter family sedans that buzz around race courses like a swarm of killer bees. The Brits, however, are mad for these buzz bombs—and a few entrepreneurs believe that their American cousins will be equally daffy for four-door race cars.

The North American Touring Car Championship debuted on Memorial Day at Lime Rock Park in the Connecticut countryside, just up the road from where all that nastiness of the Revolutionary War began a couple of centuries ago. Although there was nary a red coat to be seen at Lime Rock, the Brits got whipped again—this time by a pair of Dodge Stratus sedans backed by the Chrysler Corp.

Dodge drivers David Donohue (the son of American racing legend Mark Donohue) and Dominic Dobson became footnotes in motorsports history by winning the inaugural rounds of the NATCC over an admittedly sparse field of Hondas, Toyotas and BMWs and a lone Mercedes. With the notable exception of Chrysler's American-made entries, the contenders were refugees from the senior British series.

The North American Touring Car Championship (NATCC) has several obstacles to overcome before it can be a serious player in the American motorsports arena. The looming question is whether America has room for yet another road racing series.

Touring Car racing is a home run in Spain, Germany, France, Italy, Australia and other foreign lands. In every instance, the Super Touring cars filled the need for a production-based series that spectators could identify with their own prosaic commuter cars. Automakers have enthusiastically supported these series that showcase bread-and-butter models.

But the United States has no lack of indigenous production-based series. NASCAR's wildly successful Winston Cup and Grand National circuits are magnets for race fans, television coverage and sponsor dollars. The Sports Car Club of America's World Challenge and IMSA's Endurance Championship series fill in the niches with race-prepared showroom models that often play to crowds numbering in the dozens.

Thus the fate of Touring Car racing in America hinges on the auto companies—and not necessarily the ones with headquarters in Detroit. Prosperous and promotion-minded marques such as Honda, Toyota, Nissan and BMW are effectively locked out of big-time sedan racing by NASCAR's single-minded devotion to American iron. But these automakers have seen the future, and it has four doors. Sales of two-door coupes and sports cars—the traditional mainstays of American motorsports—have gone in the tank as buyers turned to practical sedans for transportation and macho sport utilities for ego gratification. If the imports jump on the Touring Car bandwagon, the NATCC may prove to be an alternative to low-tech, big-cubic-inch stock car racing.

Three years ago, the notion of racing pickups on oval tracks evoked laughter; now NASCAR's truck racing series is a solid-gold hit. Perhaps a nation that can adopt pickups as legitimate racing vehicles can learn to love four-door race cars as well. ★

PHOTOS BY GEOFFREY HEWITT

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SPORT MAGAZINE

How's your sports IQ? The famous SPORT Quiz has been separating the savvy fan from the weekend wimp for decades. See how you do with these 13 questions. Then check the answers below for your score, and rate yourself as follows: **12-13 correct: Sports genius 9-11 correct: Good fan 6-8 correct: Working too hard 3-5 correct: To the showers 0-2 correct: Try knitting**

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1. This big-play receiver (pictured) led the NFL last season in catches of 20 or more yards. Name him.

2. Wayne Gretzky holds the all-time record for goals scored in a season with how many?
   A. 82 B. 87
   C. 92 D. 97

3. Since 1950, three big-league relief pitchers have won the MVP award. Name two of them.

4. Name the only player in baseball history to win batting titles in three different decades.

5. Match the college football team with its historical Division 1-A achievement.
   A. Alabama B. Nebraska
   C. Notre Dame D. Michigan
   1. Most AP national titles 2. Most all-time wins 3. Most bowl-game appearances 4. None of the above

6. Which was the only NHL team last season to finish above .500 and not make the playoffs?

7. Which American League team has had the most wins in the 1990s?
   A. White Sox B. Blue Jays
   C. Indians D. Orioles

8. Who was awarded the Associated Press' 1995 male Athlete of the Year?

9. Name the only NBA player to average more than 40 minutes a game in each of the last two seasons.
   A. Anthony Mason B. Glen Rice
   C. Latrell Sprewell D. Vin Baker

10. Name the only two NBA league MVPs never to have won a championship.

11. Which was the last AFC team to win a Super Bowl?

12. With the retirement of Tom Lasorda, which big-league manager has the longest tenure with one team?

13. Match the following NFL Smiths with the colleges they played for.
    A. Bruce Smith B. Emmitt Smith
    C. Neil Smith D. Robert Smith
    1. Nebraska 2. Ohio State
    3. Florida 4. Virginia Tech

—Steve Gordon

STUMPER Name the only man in pro football history to have been an assistant coach, a head coach, an owner and a league commissioner.

OCT. '96 STUMPER ANSWER Bob Watson ("Who scored the millionth run in major-league baseball history?")

THIS MONTH'S QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Isaac Bruce 2. C 3. Rollie Fingers, Willie Hernandez, Dennis Eckersley 4. George Brett (1976, 1980, 1990) 5. A-3, B-4, C-1, D-2 6. New Jersey 7. A 8. Cal Ripken Jr. 9. D 10. Charles Barkley, David Robinson 11. Raiders 12. Jim Leyland, Pittsburgh 13. A-4, B-3, C-1, D-2

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GOLFING TRENDS

NOTES FROM THE TOUR

A Price Change, Watson's Newest Odyssey and More/ By Ed Kiersh

How the Ball Turns—Until a few years ago, Nick Price endorsed RAM golf equipment. Then, when he began to dominate the tour in 1993 and '94, Price got too pricey for this family-owned company and moved on to Atrigon, commanding a 10-percent share of that company and $2.5 million a year for 10 years. Now that Atrigon is struggling to stay afloat, he's trying to negotiate a new deal and has reportedly talked to RAM. But though Price's endorsement value has precipitously shrunk to about $500,000, don't start feeling sorry for him or his management firm, Masters International. Headed by multimillionaire John Bredenkamp, Masters has been in the market to buy an equipment company, and while its efforts to acquire Founders Club failed, this firm has the financial clout to pick up another "trophy."

A Slap in the Face—Tom Watson has been associated with RAM equipment for more than two decades. Throughout his winless drought of 141 tournaments, he remained faithful to RAM, often using one of the company's Zebra putters. But when he finally ended his nine-year dry spell at the Memorial last June, he discarded that Zebra, essentially insulting his pals at RAM. Putting like the Watson of old, he used an Odyssey DF 990 to capture the $324,000 title—a switch Odyssey was quick to trumpet in a blitz of self-congratulatory news releases.

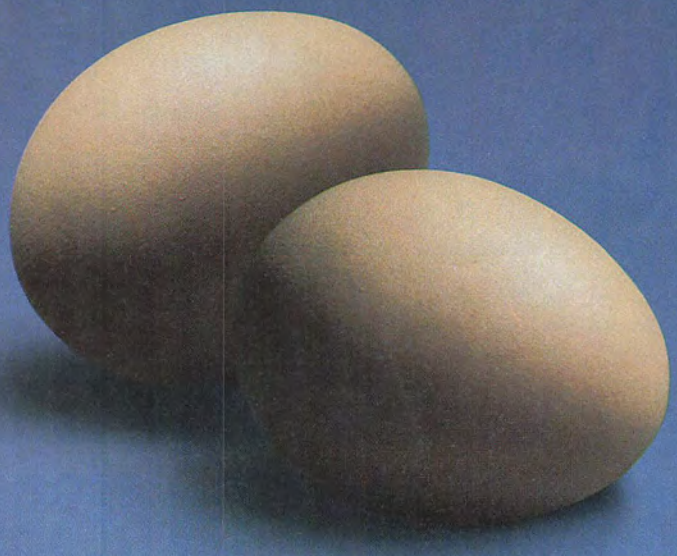
Move Over, Calvin Klein—Payne Stewart has declared war on Greg Norman. Hoping to blow the Great White Shark out of the water, the always-dapper Stewart will step up efforts to compete with Norman's own clothing line when he introduces an extensive sports and outerwear collection this fall. Says the collection's director, Doug Conklyn, of Stewart's involvement: "He likes bright colors, flamboyant clothing, and when we put this line together, going over plaids, sketches, etc., he was very demanding. A clothes horse, he wants every button, pocket and cloth to be just right."

A Fallen Star—These haven't been the best of times for Hollywood's Kevin Costner. While drowning in the bad reviews for *Waterworld*, suffering through the criticism (and delayed release) of the golf movie *Tin Cup*, and in general seeing his comet fall to earth, Costner has been embroiled in a lengthy struggle with the Sioux tribe over his plans to develop a $140 million golf course/resort in Deadwood, S.D. Both Costner and brother Dan insist the golf project (along with a casino, hotel and railroad link) will rejuvenate this Black Hills locale. But the Sioux, long at odds with this project in the courts, feel the blasting of golf balls on their spiritual burial grounds is way out of bounds and view the Costners as the ultimate bogeys.

Who's Minding the Store?—A player has to be really hurting to pull out of a U.S. Open. So the talk around the Oakland Hills clubhouse was that Freddie Couples, long plagued by back problems, was nearing the end of his career. Observers also wondered why Couples' management staff, Players Group, allowed him to take long plane trips to the Far East last winter. "Competing in those events means money and exposure, but it's still insane," says one source. "Those trips are just killers on his back."

The Great Blackout—Now golf-crazed Taiwanese, Japanese and Australians can get a steady diet of watching Greg Norman fold in the stretch. The Golf Channel is coming to the Pacific Rim. But Arnold Palmer's network (he owns a hefty share of the cable channel) still isn't accessible in many major American TV markets due to the initial marketing blunder of trying to sell this network as a premium channel. So the industry joke about Arnie's venture remains, "It's extraordinary golf coverage—it's just too bad no one gets to see it."

HOW DO YOU LIKE YOUR EGGS?



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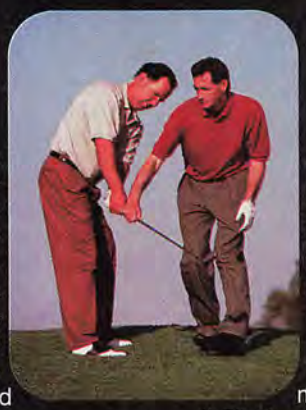
GOLFING TRENDS

Curing the Dreaded Slice

It's public enemy No. 1. Probably 90 percent of golfers make the mistake of hitting the ball with an open clubface, or one that's opening. Slicers typically have the club at too steep an approach angle when coming into the ball. That's what I call swinging the golf club on too straight a line. This is trouble because it causes golfers to hit with the side of their hand facing the target at impact as opposed to the back of their hand. Their arms reverse-rotate, leading to an open clubface at impact that results in a slice.

The cure is to swing on an arc, a circular motion of bringing the club up and around the body on both the backswing and downswing, with a feeling that the club is swinging out to the right and around to the left during the follow-through.

To start swinging this way, I recommend the following steps: 1) Adjust your grip. Slicers tend to have their hands too much on top of the club, with the V's of their hands pointed toward their left eye. Gripping the club too weakly makes it difficult for your hands to turn over, so almost everybody who slices will benefit from trying a stronger grip. This means turning your hands so that the V's are formed by your thumb and forefingers pointed more toward your right shoulder.



COURTESY HANK HANEY

2) Hold the club 2 feet off the ground, then take a couple of practice swings as if you were hitting the ball off a high tee. Feel your shoulders and arms rotate as the club swings back on the arc. The clubface is opening on the backswing and it's closing as you're rotating through impact. That's the key motion you need to square the clubface.

TIP OF THE MONTH

3) Practice by using a club that has a straight face, like a 5-iron or 3-wood. You want to use these clubs to see if you're getting that rounded motion. Practice with tees, not with balls sitting on the ground, which makes for a steeper swing to hit the ball. Players who slice already have too steep a motion. You want to feel as if you're swinging around your body on an arc instead of straight up and down. The key is to feel as if you're swinging into right field and finishing toward left field to make that arc.

4) Finally, use a driver that has more loft. A club with 9.5 degrees of loft is the minimum, but 10 to 11 works real well for a slicer, since more loft will help you hit underneath the ball, and the more backspin you put on the ball the more you offset the sidespin of a slice.

Just remember, you get far more distance by hitting with a slight draw (right to left for right-handers), and to do that, put that arc into your swing. It's the path to lower scores. *—Hank Haney*

Mark O'Meara's instructor for 12 years, Hank Haney has been teaching for two decades. For his efforts at the Hank Haney Golf Ranch in McKinney, Texas, he was named the PGA's 1993 Teacher of the Year.

MIKE KLEMME/GOLFOTO

FLORIDA

BOCA RATON RESORT AND CLUB

The challenge begins alongside the Atlantic on a sun-kissed stretch of beach. Sitting amid a bounty of banyan trees, tropical drinks and other seductive joys to behold, guests at the Boca Raton Resort and Club will be hard-pressed to leave this lap of luxury for golf's traditional travails.

But once visitors leave the beauties of the beach club and ferry across the Intracoastal Waterway to reach the pecky, cypress-lined 6,523-yard golf course, they'll discover that this 70-year-old Florida getaway—one of the world's most honored destinations—offers "resort golf" at its most pleasurable best.

Instead of battering golfers with long, forced carries and postage-stamp-sized greens, the hotel's Resort Course welcomes all handicappers with wide, impeccably groomed fairways, a veritable nature trail through scores of palm trees, and water hazards that are more fun than severe.

Help can be found at the resort's Dave Pelz Short Game School. A former NASA scientist, internationally reputed for curing Peter Jacobsen's putting woes, Pelz conducts weekly sessions dedicated to stroke saving. But if you want to be launched down this winning path, book early. His classes fill up quickly.

To fine-tune that putting touch, resort guests can play two demanding layouts only a few miles from the beach. But no matter what your course or game—scuba diving, speedboat racing, dining in five-star restaurants, or just sitting next to splashing fountains and talking to birds in tropical gardens—the scorecard here consistently totals fantasy and enchantment.

(Located about 30 minutes north of Ft. Lauderdale in Boca Raton, the Boca Raton Resort and Club offers golf packages throughout the year. For further information call 800/327-0101.) *—Ed Kiersh*

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GOLFING TRENDS

MITCHELL HADDAD

He was the Heartbreak Kid, always struggling to stay afloat.

But after years of playing assorted mini-tours, living in fleabag motels, surviving a bout with colon cancer, and coping with disappointing second-place finishes—most recently the 1996 U.S. Open—Tom Lehman finally has banished his demons. With his win in this year's British Open serving as an exclamation point, he now deserves recognition as one of the game's premier players.

"The struggling wasn't exactly fun, yet all the missed cuts, the traveling, did mentally steel me, and made this win all the sweeter," says Lehman, 37, after braving a final-round challenge from the world's best player, Nick Faldo.

Now the soft-spoken Minnesotan has his long-sought major, and in light of his never-giving-up hope, he'll undoubtedly be accorded all the perks that accompany a golfer's reaching that mountain-top. But what an arduous journey it's been for Lehman, winning only $39,000 in his first three seasons as a touring pro, from 1983 through 1985, and

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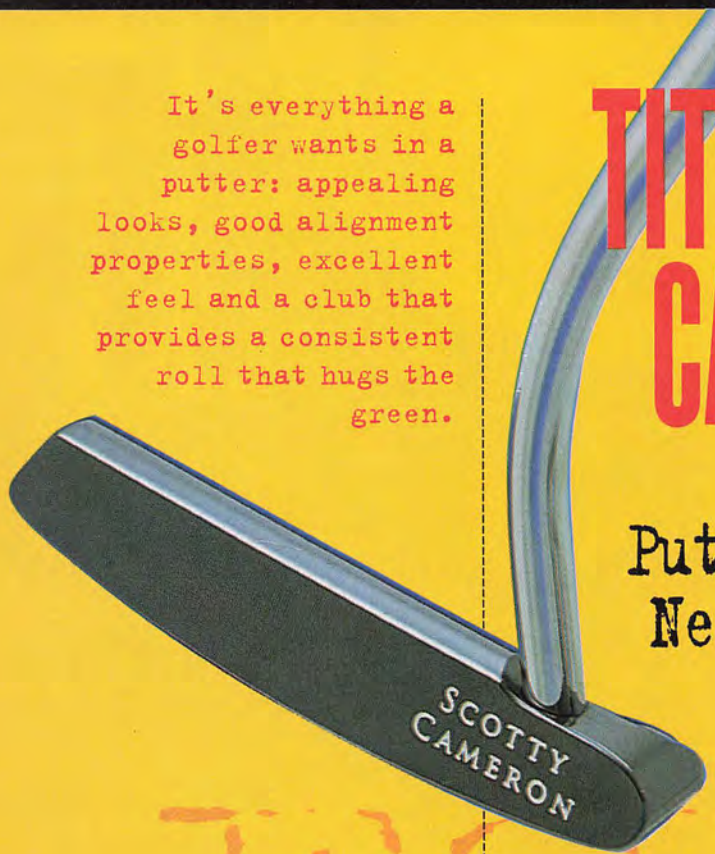

The Proof Is in the Putting: Top Designer's New Creation Is Love at First Sight

EQUIP

Tom Lehman

A Major Leap into the Elite

By Ed Kiersh

being forced several times to go back to the tour's qualifying school.

"What else could I do, rent out skis?" Lehman quips, a reference to a job once offered him by his University of Minnesota alma mater. "Having this dream of succeeding, being recognized by my peers as a top player, I just kept going in the 1980s. I had to forget the pressure, the fact that every shot was a matter of financial survival."

Ultimately working with renowned teacher Jim Flick and finding "consistency in the way I wanted to strike the ball," Lehman rejoined the tour at the "ripe old age of 33." He paid his dues on the Sunshine Tour in South Africa, fine-tuning his game against the likes of Nick Price, and won $579,000 in 1992. He's since gone on to win the Memorial and the Colonial, and solidified a win for the United States in the 1995 Ryder Cup by ripping a memorable 190-yard 5-iron to the 18th green at Oak Hill.

That pin-hugging shot, coming during a heavy downpour and amid the pressure of this international event, was his defining moment until the British Open. Plagued by a shaky putter ("Putting remains a mystery to me"), he came close to winning majors, like his second-place finish in the '94 Masters, but never closed the deal.

But now those frustrations are ancient history. By winning the British and more than $1 million this year, he's moved into golf's elite class. Yet the unassuming Lehman, who's known on the tour for giving rivals pep talks during rounds, still sees himself "on a ladder taking little steps up and up," and he has a message for us all.

"Winning a major definitely gets me the recognition I want as a super player," says Lehman. "But no way would my life be incomplete if I hadn't won one. I've long learned to trust and to believe in myself. I've never quit, even with all the ups and downs. That's all that can be expected of anyone—facing a challenge, trying to make the major leagues and giving it your best shot."

You may not possess the skill required to play like your favorite PGA Tour star, but now you have the opportunity to strike the ball with the same equipment used by the pros.

Golf-club manufacturers sponsorship has grown to such a degree on all of the professional circuits that a player and his or her company have become inseparably associated with one another via nothing more than flashy television and print advertisements and nothing less than a catchy logo scrawled across the player's bag or cap.

But almost all of the game's top stars reserve the right in their endorsement contracts to play a "putter of choice," regardless of its manufacturer or brand. So when you see a player use a particular putter, rest assured he is doing so because this club helps him get the ball into the hole.

Enter Scotty Cameron, for years one of the golf industry's top club designers, who, not long ago, offered his highly skilled services to Titleist. Cameron has designed the Scotty Cameron By Titleist line of putters, which many tour players covet and have put to good use in winning golf tournaments world-wide. Indeed, well more than a hundred of these pros have used a Scotty Cameron Titleist putter in tournament competition, and the number seems to rise each week.

What a golfer wants in a putter is a magical combination of appealing looks, good alignment properties, excellent feel and a club that produces a consistent roll that hugs the green and provides precise distance control. Cameron's putters deliver in superb fashion in each of these categories.

Titleist's famous line of Bulls Eye putters, originally designed by John Reuter, has been enhanced by Cameron, who has made the classic putter head slightly longer for better balance and stability and has increased the head weight for enhanced feel. He also has bevelled the leading edge of the putter to minimize drag and has added a new paddle wrap grip for comfort and easy alignment.

Cameron has designed several other models for Titleist as well. One line features milled faces of the highest quality and includes eight specific models. Of the "Sonoma" and "Santa Fe" milled models, Cameron says, "Many of the world's best players want their putters to have enhanced classical lines, and that's where the Santa Fe and Sonoma answer the call. These putters bolster putting confidence by blending precision design with hand-crafted, soft, solid components for consistently true and solid feel."

They say finding the right putter for a golfer is akin to falling in love at first sight: You just know instantly that this is the right one for you. Indeed, like romance, the relationship between a golfer and a putter hopefully will deepen and mature over time. If this analogy proves overly dramatic for your athletic tastes, at least take comfort in knowing that in selecting a Scotty Cameron By Titleist putter, you are purchasing one of the best putting instruments money can buy. ***—Andy Brummer***

HOTSHOT

Mark Brunell

Young Again

The likening of Jacksonville Jaguars quarterback Mark Brunell to 1994 NFL MVP Steve Young has gotten as much mileage as a 1972 Volkswagen Beetle. But unlike the VW, the comparison doesn't lose value with repeated use.

Both Brunell and Young wear an 8 on their jerseys and are southpaws, rugged and powerful, with an affinity for venturing from the pocket. Stop me if you've heard this one before.

"I hear it quite a bit, but it doesn't really bother me much," says the 6-foot, 217-pound Brunell. "I don't know if I can shake him—we're both the same number, both left-handed and we both run a little bit."

Brunell ran more than a little bit last season, netting 480 yards on the ground to become the first AFC quarterback since 1983 to rush for more than 400 in a season. And when operating from the fragile security of the Jaguars' pocket, he displayed touch and often masterful accuracy, throwing for 15 touchdowns and only seven interceptions in bringing Jacksonville four gritty expansion wins.

Although limited to clipboard-carrying duty in Green Bay for two years (appearing in two games) after being selected 118th overall in the '93 draft, Brunell was much desired around the NFL. The Eagles made a play before the Jaguars bagged the former Washington Huskie for third- and fifth-round draft picks in their first-ever trade. Now the cornerstone of the young franchise, which bolstered its chances with an off-season of worthwhile free-agent acquisitions, Brunell is conscious of the development required to have his team compared to the Niners as often as he is to Young.

"You've got to be able to know when to run and when to stay in the pocket," says the 26-year-old. "The idea is to stay in the pocket and throw the ball. No pass play is designed for the quarterback to take off and run."

—Paul M. Johnson

PAUL CHAPMAN/BRSP

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sport facts

NOTEWORTHY NUMBERS AND STAT ODDITIES

By Dan Gordon

Number of times (including playoffs) that Green Bay will have played in Texas Stadium since 1993 after the Packers visit Dallas Nov. 18: 7

Of the previous six games, number won by Green Bay: 0

Visits by the Cowboys to Wisconsin during that time: 0

Number of teams that have played in the World Series since the last time the Yankees were there, in 1981: 17

Percentage of teams that have won the World Series after losing the opening game: 41

Percentage of teams that have won after being down two games to one: 29

Percentage of teams winning after trailing three games to two: 20

Percentage of teams winning after being down 2-0: 11

Percentage of teams winning after being down 3-1: 7

Percentage of teams winning after being down 3-0: 0

Years since two players have hit 50 homers in the same season: 35 (Roger Maris and Mickey Mantle in 1961)

Amount paid by Lakers owner Jerry Buss for the Los Angeles franchise in 1979: $16 million

Amount Buss will be paying new center Shaquille O'Neal this season: $17 million

O'Neal's estimated endorsement income last year: $14.5 million

What Michael Jordan's 1996-97 $25 million salary amounts to per regular-season game: $304,878.05

Number of NFL teams that have made the playoffs every season in the '90s: 1 (Kansas City)

Chiefs' winning percentage in '90s postseason competition: .333

Longest current drought since making the NFL playoffs, in years: 13 (Tampa Bay and St. Louis/Arizona Cardinals)

Longest current drought among AFC teams: 7 (Seattle)

Number of head coaches who have taken two different teams to the Super Bowl: 1 (Don Shula, Baltimore and Miami)

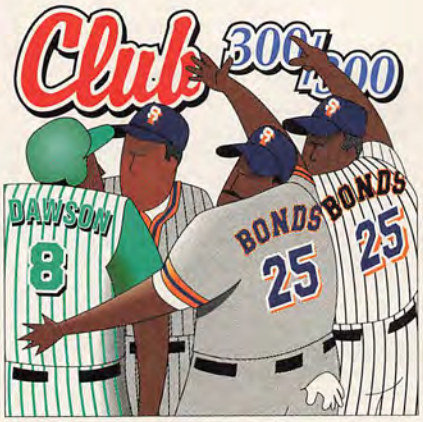
Coaches trying to duplicate Shula's accomplishment this season: 3 (Miami's Jimmy Johnson, New England's Bill Parcells, and the New York Giants' Dan Reeves)

Denver's NFL-best home winning percentage since 1975, entering this season: .739

Cigar's record time in last year's Breeders' Cup Classic, despite the soggy course: 1:59⅘

Number of years the National League has outscored the American League since the AL instituted the designated-hitter rule in 1973: 1

Number of times the AL has registered a higher attendance average than the NL in those 23 seasons: 5



Number of players besides retiring Andre Dawson with more than 300 homers and 300 steals in their career: 3

Of those, number who are related to each other—by blood or otherwise: 3 (Barry Bonds, his father Bobby, and his godfather Willie Mays) ★

INFOGRAPHICS: TREVOR JOHNSTON

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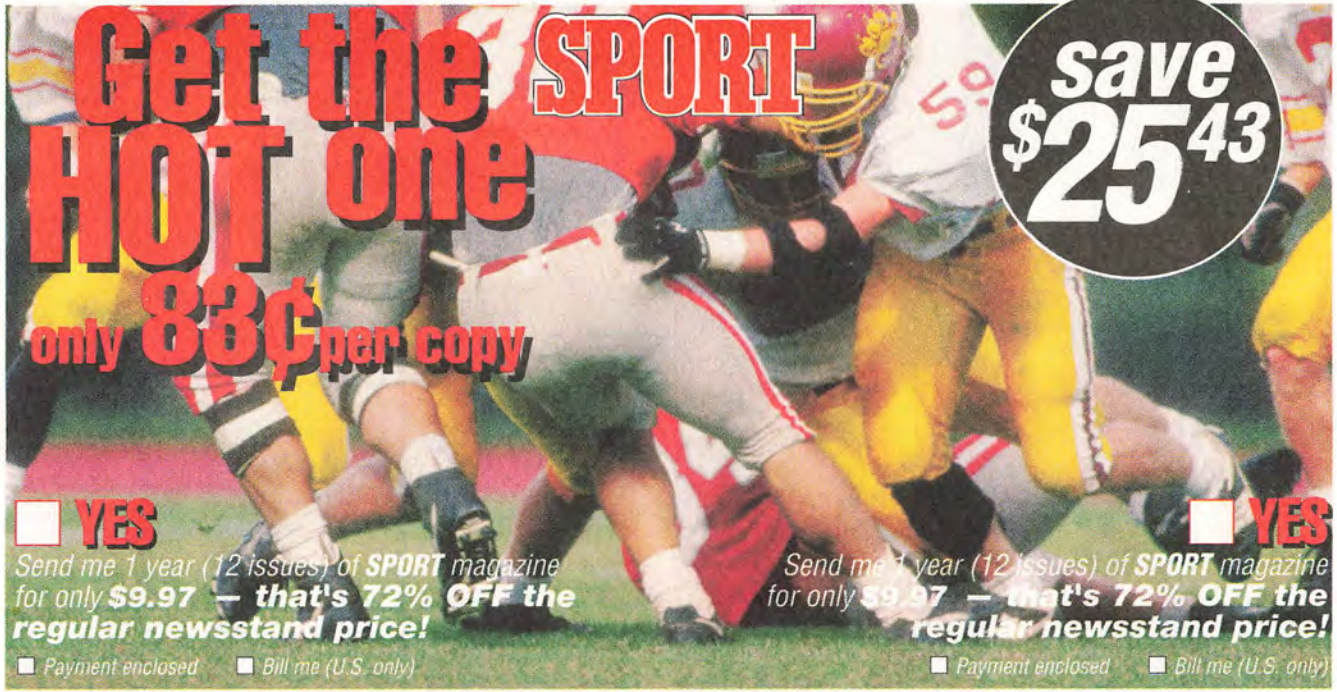
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